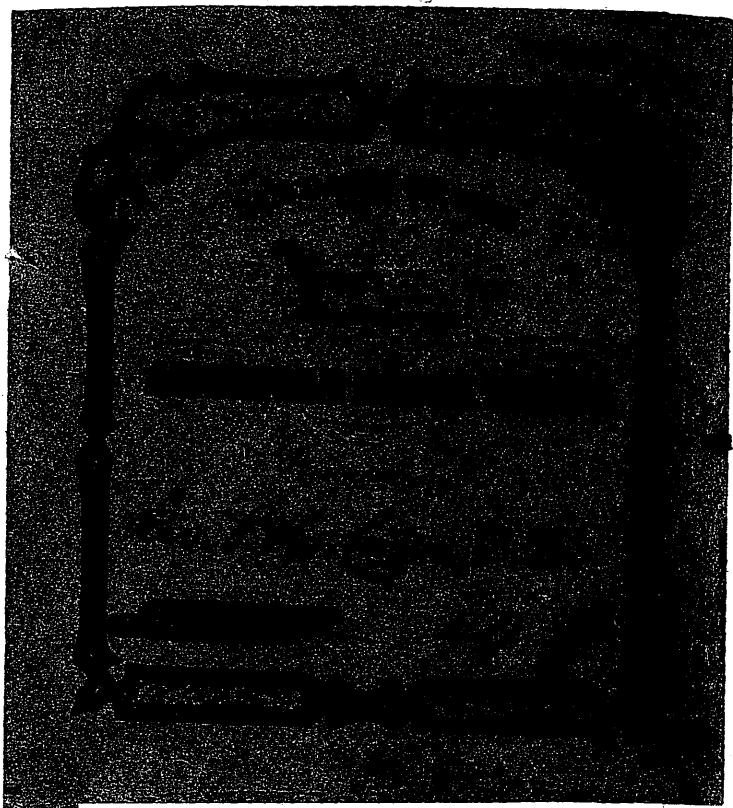


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THE
CHRISTIAN'S COMPANION

FOR THE

SABBATH ;

SUITED FOR THE FAMILY OR CLOSET :

CONSISTING OF

MEDITATIONS

DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL, AND PRACTICAL,

FOR EACH

LORD'S DAY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

~~~~~  
**BY W. MASON.**  
~~~~~

There remaineth a Rest, (or keeping a Sabbath) to the People of God.
HER. iv. 9.

London :

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PREFACE.

THE following Work is designed for spiritual profit, and is humbly dedicated to my fellow Christians of all denominations, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. I mean not hereby to invade the office of the Preacher, nor by any means to supersede attendance on public Worship. Far from it. My design is only to cast a mite into the public treasury, which may, by the blessing of God, conduce to spiritual advantage. It is calculated for a leisure season, before engaging in, or after retirement from the stated Worship of the LORD'S DAY; either for the Closet or in the Family, or when, through absolute necessity, detained from the Lord's House. For it is a fixed truth, and observation and experience daily confirm it, that men profane the Sabbath, because they know not the love of JESUS, THE TRUE GOD, AND ETERNAL LIFE. 1 John v. 20. But as soon as they believe in him, and become acquainted with him, then they devote themselves to him, and keep holy his Sabbaths, to the honour and glory of his Name. And hereby their souls are nourished, edified, and built up, in the truth as it is in him.

Many, very many are the discouragements which I labour under, in offering a Work of this kind to the Christian world. Did I not look above and beyond myself, I should never have attempted it. But under every discouragement, the Lord being my helper, and taking his blessed Word for my guide, my companion, and my familiar friend, I have humbly presumed to bear this witness to our Lord, being fully persuaded, that though it be but as administering a cup of cold water in the

name of Christ, he will graciously accept it, even though imperfection be stamped on every page. To him I commend it. May he be pleased in mercy to pardon all that is amiss, and graciously bless every truth contained in it to your soul's profit. O, that we may keep an everlasting Sabbath with him !

I am happy to find that this Work, which has been long in hand, comes forth at a time when the zeal of many Christians is excited to suppress the open and daring profanation of the Lord's Day. A Society is formed for carrying on that laudable undertaking, at their own expence. Very pleasing consequences have ensued. The face of reformation appears. That daring and open impiety, which has been so long carried on, and complained of, in defiance both of the laws of God and man, now begins to skulk into holes and corners. Farther and greater success may be expected. This society is numerous. Their expences very great. They crave your assistance. Their language is, " Who is on the Lord's side ? Who ? " If you believe the Lord's Word, if you love his name, if you reverence his Sabbaths, if you dread his judgments, if you would stop the growth of this profaneness, shew your faith by your works. Lend your assistance to this righteous cause, and enquire for this Society, which meets in *Castle-street, Leicester-fields ; Coach-makers' Hall, in London ;* and in the *Borough of Southwark.*

W. MASON.

London, 1777.

CONTENTS.

First Lord's Day in the Year.	Page
<i>THE Gospel Law of the Sabbath, Exod. xxxi. 12, 13. ...</i>	1
Second Lord's Day.	
<i>The Reason for keeping the Sabbath, Exod. xxxi. 13. ...</i>	8
Third Lord's Day.	
<i>The blessed End of keeping the Sabbath, Exod. xxxi. 13. ...</i>	15
Fourth Lord's Day.	
<i>The Christian's Duty in Time of Calamity, Psalm l. 15. ...</i>	24
Fifth Lord's Day.	
<i>The Gift of Jesus for us, Tit. ii. 13, 14.</i>	32
Sixth Lord's Day.	
<i>On Zeal for good Works, Tit. ii. 14.</i>	40
Seventh Lord's Day.	
<i>On Enjoyment of the Spirit, John xiv. 17.</i>	48
Eighth Lord's Day.	
<i>On falling from our Stedfastness, 2 Pet. iii. 17.</i>	56
Ninth Lord's Day.	
<i>Christian's Duty to the feeble minded, 1 Thess. v. 14.</i>	63
Tenth Lord's Day.	
<i>On our holy and heavenly calling, Heb. iii. 1.</i>	70
Eleventh Lord's Day.	
<i>On Christian Confession, Heb. xi. 13.</i>	78

Twelfth Lord's Day.

Remembering Christ's Words, the best Antidote against Unbelief, Luke xxiv. 8. 86

Thirteenth Lord's Day.

On the Knowledge of God, Heb. xi. 6. 94

Fourteenth Lord's Day.

On Spiritual Transformation, 2 Cor. iii. 18. 101

Fifteenth Lord's Day.

The Blessedness of Spiritual Hunger and Thirst, Matt. v. 6. 108

Sixteenth Lord's Day.

On grieving and quenching the Spirit, Eph. v. 20.—1 Thess. v. 19. 117

Seventeenth Lord's Day.

On using the Law unlawfully, 1 Tim. i. 8, 9. 127

Eighteenth Lord's Day.

The lawful Use of the Law, 1 Tim. i. 8. 136

Nineteenth Lord's Day.

Christ's gracious Dealing with sleeping Professors, Rev. iii. 20. 144

Twentieth Lord's Day.

The Lord's Love to, and Care for, his People in Darkness, Isai. l. 10. 153

Twenty-first Lord's Day.

The Lord's Delight in his People, Psalm cxlvii. 11. 162

Twenty-second Lord's Day.

Seeking the Honour of Men, the Hindrance of Faith, John v. 44. 170

Twenty-Third Lord's Day.

On the Ministerial Office of Christ, Isai. lxi. 1, 2. 177

Twenty-fourth Lord's Day.

On worshipping Jesus, and the Doubts of Disciples, Matt. xxviii. 17. 186

Twenty-fifth Lord's Day.

The Lord's Call to sleeping Professors, Ephes. v. 14. ... 194

Twenty-six Lord's Day.

The Blessedness of enduring to the end, Heb. x. 37, 38. ... 202

Twenty-seventh Lord's Day.

On the Gospel, Mark i. 1. 215

Twenty-eighth Lord's Day.

Christ's Love and his Disciples' Duty, Matthew xxvi. 41. 223

Twenty-ninth Lord's Day.

The Hinderance of Prayer, 1 Pet. iii. 7. 231

Thirtieth Lord's Day.

The Christian's Rule of Addition, 2 Pet. i. 5. 238

Thirty-first Lord's Day.

The Sovereignty of Grace in Conversion, Acts ix. 8. 246

Thirty-second Lord's Day.

Love, the End of the Commandment, 1 Tim. v. 6. 254

Thirty-third Lord's Day.

Christian Liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17. 261

Thirty-fourth Lord's Day.

Christ's Resurrection, Luke xxiv. 34. 270

Thirty-fifth Lord's Day.

Christ's appearing to Peter, Luke xxiv. 34. 279

Thirty-sixth Lord's Day.

On humble Walking, Micah vi. 8. 287

Thirty-seventh Lord's Day.

Our Lord's Caution against Pharisaism, Luke xii. 1. ... 296

Thirty-eighth Lord's Day.

On the Unbelief of Thomas, John xx. 27. 304

Thirty-ninth Lord's Day.

On Self-denial, Luke ix. 23. 312

Fortieth Lord's Day.

On Spiritual Joy, Heb. iii. 18. 318

Forty-first Lord's Day.

On Prayer, Luke xi. 2. 325

Forty-second Lord's Day.	
<i>The everlasting Covenant</i> , Gen. xvii. 13.	333
Forty-third Lord's Day.	
<i>Gospel Holiness</i> , Psalm cx. 3.	341
Forty-fourth Lord's Day.	
<i>On Antinomianism</i> , Jude 4.	349
Forty-fifth Lord's Day.	
<i>On humbling ourselves</i> , 1 Pet. v. 6.	357
Forty-sixth Lord's Day.	
<i>Man's State and Doom</i> , Gen. iii. 19.	364
Forty-seventh Lord's Day.	
<i>On Backsliding</i> , Hosea v. 15.	372
Forty-eighth Lord's Day.	
<i>The Duty of Prisoners of Hope</i> , Zech. iii. 12.	380
Forty-ninth Lord's Day.	
<i>On neglecting Salvation</i> , Heb. ii. 3.	387
Fiftieth Lord's Day.	
<i>On spiritual worshippers</i> , John iv. 23.	393
Fifty-first Lord's Day.	
<i>On being made meet for glory</i> , Col. i. 12.	401
Last Lord's Day in the Year.	
<i>On the Portion of Saints</i> , 2 Cor. xiii. 14.	409

MEDITATIONS, &c.

The First Lord's Day in the Year.

THE GOSPEL LAW OF THE SABBATH, GIVEN BY MOSES.

The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, speak thou unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you, throughout your generations, that ye may know, that I am the LORD who doth sanctify you. Exod. xxxi. 12, 13.

WE may well usher in this new year, singing with wonder,
in deep humility, and unfeigned gratitude,

And are we sinners yet alive!

We rebels out of hell!

This is strange language to those who live in the old state they were born in. But as verily as a new year is commenced, so every man who is in Christ is a new creature; he is passed from his old state of darkness, ignorance, sin, curse and wrath, into a new state of light, knowledge, righteousness, blessedness and love. Is it any wonder, then, that he has new language, and that he judges of himself and things according to his new covenant state in Christ, and speaks as a subject of his kingdom in which he lives? and, as the old year is passed away, never, never more to return; so is it as absolutely impossible for any new creature in Christ, ever to return again to his old state, so as ever to fall under the curse of the law, the wrath of God, and the destruction of sin. "For, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus hath blessed him with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places or things: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Ephes. i. 3, 4. It is the view of this, and this only, which can make us keep a happy, a joyful new year. For old, legal hearts see no farther than the letter of the precept. They turn every gospel declaration into a legal command, seek to obey it from selfish motives, and to legal ends, even to establish their own righteousness, and to recommend themselves unto God. But evangelical minds are studious to see gospel grace hid under every command of the law. Therefore, such dig deep in the precious field of God's word, to find in every text that pearl of great price, Jesus, the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners; having found him, we sell all our natural wisdom, and hopes of righteousness by the law, give up all expectations from

ourselves and from the law, that we may win Christ, cleave to him, be found in him, and enjoy fellowship with him, who is **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Jer. xxxiii. 16. Then we turn every legal precept into an evangelical declaration, or gospel promise. We receive it in the faith of Christ, view it in the face of him, as centering in him, and pointing to him. Then to him our hearts bow in humility, devotion, love, and praise. Thus it should be with us, when ever we take up the book of God. For Christ is the sum and substance of it.

Here is the everlasting gospel of the sabbath. Jehovah himself proclaims it to Moses, and commands him to preach it to his chosen Israel, his covenant people *only*. For the sabbath is an unchangeable *sign* of that everlasting covenant which subsists between the **LORD** and them *only*. The sabbath is an emblem and earnest of that eternal rest they shall enjoy with him. None but those who are in covenant love with the **LORD**, and under the special influence of his covenant grace, can see the spiritual design and end of the **LORD**, in instituting the sabbath; and they only are enabled to keep the sabbath, in a spiritual manner, holy unto the **LORD**. For the great God and our SAVIOUR, is in the institution, the institution points to him, and this command is unto all who know him.

The whole world is manifestly distinguished under these three characters. (1st.) The outwardly profane. These spend the sabbath in gratifying the flesh, and fulfilling its lusts, with the grovelling sensuality of the beast, and the daring rebellion of the devil. This is natural to them. Thus they give full evidence that they are enemies to God in their minds, by wicked works: Col. i. 21. living and dying such, most awful reflection! their end will be destruction from the presence of the Lord. (2nd.) The formal and self-righteous. These are more decent in their conduct. They attend places of worship, and perform religious duties: but these pollute the sabbaths, as much as the former, though in a very different way. For, while the former are gratifying their carnal lusts, these are establishing their self-righteous pride: while one proclaims his sin like Sodom; the other displays his pride like the Pharisee. Their grand aim, in observing the sabbath, is to satisfy conscience, and to establish a self-righteous character, wherein to trust, and whereof to glory before God; so as to think of Christ, I have no need of thee; and to say to a fellow sinner, stand off, come not near me, I am holier than thou. The fate of such, our Lord determines. Luke xviii. (3d.) New creatures in Christ. These see the spirituality of the institution of the Lord's sabbaths: seek to enjoy the Lord in them, and keep them, in the Spirit of his truths, to the ends

for which he appointed, and as he commands in the text. In which are contained,

First, A holy command, "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep."

Secondly, The precious reason for this, "For it is a sign between me and you."

Thirdly, The blessed end of this, "That ye may know that I am the LORD who doth sanctify you."

Each of these points will afford sufficient matter for a distinct meditation. O may the Lord of the sabbath enlighten our views, spiritualize our affections, and engage our hearts, sweetly to attend to them. First, The holy command, My sabbaths ye shall keep. O that from happy experience we may reply, Verily in keeping them there is great reward. Here is a positive and perpetual command to all God's people, which can never be repealed. It is for ever binding in its moral nature: for ever to be obeyed to spiritual ends. For, the glory of God, and the good of our souls, are closely connected with it, and greatly promoted by it. But when we read, or hear of a command from God, such is the legality of our nature, that we are prone to think of obeying it, to some legal end, or self-righteous purpose; and so our spirits are brought under bondage to the law. Whereas, the command of the sabbath is a command of Grace. The grace of the Lord is displayed in it, and the end of obeying it is, that his grace may be communicated to us. For, we are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. vi. 14. Why then do we not take up every command in a gospel spirit? Why are we ever contracted in our hearts, straitened in our spirits, and under bondage to the law? Because our beloved is surely out of sight. We are not constantly looking to Jesus, and considering him, who is the rest of our souls, as being the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth. Rom. x. 4.

For there is not a curse in the law, but he has suffered, not a command of the law, but he has fulfilled, not a shadow in the law, but he is the substance of. Hence he is the righteousness of us unrighteous sinners; and we are perfectly righteous before God, *in him*. 2 Cor. v. 21. Thus the grand end of giving the law is fully answered in Christ: by whom grace and truth cometh to us, to our joy of faith, comfort of hope, and triumph of love. O that the view of this may be ever kept clear in our conscience! For, without this our obedience to God's commands will be without spirit and life. We shall be dead in our frames, and dry in our duties. But it is so animating, so enlivening to consider Christ in the law, Christ the end of the law, the law in the hand of Christ, and that we serve the Lord Christ. Col. iii. 24. This sweetens our duties, and sanctifies our services. Therefore,

Though these words carry the sanction of a law, yet they also contain a most precious, evangelical promise to every regenerate soul. *Verily*, this is the confirming word which our dear Immanuel frequently used in the days of his flesh. It is a strong assertion, or like an oath of confirmation, that thus it shall be. It is binding to us as his word: it shall be fulfilled by us through his grace. *Verily*, my sabbaths ye **SHALL** keep. Here is the Almighty's gracious *shall*, this is the cause of our obedient *will*. When he speaks in the power of his grace to our souls, what he commands, we receive in faith, and obey in love. Thus, whatever the Lord commands in his word as a law, gospel grace improves into the spirit of liberty, and the soul obeys to gospel ends and purposes. "For, the law is written, not in tables of stone only, but upon the fleshly tables of our hearts also." 2 Cor. iii. 3. This is the Lord's gracious covenant: "I *will* put my laws into your hearts, and in your minds *will* I write them." Jer. xxxi. 33. When this law of **GOD**; this law of love; this law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, is wrote on our hearts and minds, by the Spirit of **GOD**, then we are made free from the law of sin and death. Rom. viii. 2. Then we serve and obey in the newness of the Spirit; and not in the oldness of the letter. Rom. vii. 6. Not as under the law of works, but as in the covenant of grace. For the letter [of the law of works] killeth [all our hopes towards **GOD**, all our confidence in **GOD**, and all our expectations from **GOD**,] but the Spirit [the gospel of grace] giveth life. 2 Cor. iii. 6. Even the life of faith in Jesus, hope towards **GOD**, peace from **GOD**, joy in **GOD**, love to **GOD**, and devotion of heart to the commands of **GOD**.

Therefore, when the Lord says, *Verily*, my sabbaths ye shall keep, he speaks in all his covenant persons for our good, and his glory. Here is the will of the Triune **GOD** proclaimed. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost engaged in covenant love for us sinners, say, thus it **SHALL** be. It is the will of the Father's love, of the Son's grace, and it shall be effected by communications from the Spirit's power, in the hearts of all his children: they shall keep his sabbaths, in the Spirit, and to the purposes of his institution of them. See, then, ye redeemed, called, regenerate souls, your high honor and inestimable privilege. O study, strive and pray, that in a free, loving, gospel spirit, as new creatures in Christ, ye may honor and glorify your covenant **GOD** in Jesus, by obeying this his command.

Having considered the Lord's command, let us briefly attend to our duty, in keeping the sabbath. And this in one word is, in order to get more knowledge of **GOD**, more fellowship with **GOD**, more delight in **GOD**, and more love of, and conformity to **GOD**, that we may more and more glorify **GOD**.

in our bodies, souls, and spirits, which are his. Therefore, whatever is conducive to promote this we are studiously to pursue. Whatever has a contrary tendency, we are cautiously to avoid. Let but this be the rule of our conduct, and we shall keep the Lord's sabbaths, as he has commanded, to his glory, and our soul's edification and comfort, by establishing our faith in him, confirming our hope on him, and quickening our love to him. For the sabbath is sanctified, or set apart by the Lord, for holy uses, and spiritual purposes; and therefore is to be sanctified, and set apart by us, for these blessed ends. And have we through six days laboured, in the station of life wherein God has placed us, for the meat which perisheth? The Lord in tender mercy, rich grace, and everlasting love, calls upon us to keep holy his sabbaths, and to labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed. John vi. 27. Therefore, the Christian sabbath is instituted, and is to be kept, in commemoration of Jesus having finished the work of our redemption and salvation; that he is entered into his rest, is the rest of our souls, and that we may find spiritual rest, food, and nourishment from him: refreshment, peace and joy of soul in him. O see to it, then, that we do not come short of the blessed experience of this rest in Jesus, through an attention to any worldly business, indulging earthly cares, and temporal concerns, or giving into a vain, trifling conversation about carnal things on the Lord's sabbath. Watch and pray against all these. For, be assured, these things will drive the thoughts of our beloved from our hearts, bring condemnation upon us for our folly, and rob us of the sweet peace, and heavenly rest, which are enjoyed in the commemoration of him.

Had we an object in view in our six days' labour? Were we watchful, and careful that nothing should pervert our thoughts, or divert our attention from it? Did we constantly attend to, and ardently pursue it, with unremitting diligence? Perhaps we over acted our parts here. O let us not be more remiss, and less active in the use of every means in commemoration of Christ, and for the health and prosperity of our immortal souls, on the Lord's day. Well may we say of every sabbath, This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. Ps. cxviii. 24. Rejoice, that the Lord commands us to a dismissal from worldly business, and earthly concerns: be glad, that he calls us to have but one object in view, which is to remember Christ in his love to us, and salvation of us: and God, perfectly reconciled to us, and at perfect peace with us, in Christ. But we are naturally prone to remember what we should forget, and to forget what we should

remember. This is our sin and our shame. Therefore, our dear Lord hath instituted the sabbath for our commemoration of him, and says, My sabbaths, my rest shall ye keep. Every sabbath is a call to us, to remember that Lord, who created us by the word of his power, hung upon the cross in our flesh, to redeem us from a deserved hell of wrath, and to save us to an unmerited heaven of happiness. What then should be our only concern in keeping the sabbath, but to remember him? for he is our one and only rest. We can find no rest for our souls, but in him, and from him. What can we take up any rest in and from, but in what Jesus hath done for us, and is to us? Are we creatures? He gave us our being. Are we sinful creatures? He was made sin *for us*. 2 Cor. vi. 21. Are we condemned creatures? He was made a curse *for us*. Gal. iii. 13. Are we destitute of righteousness? He is made righteousness *to us*. 1 Cor. i. 30. We are righteous in him. 2 Cor. v. 21. Are we polluted creatures? He of God is made sanctification *to us*. 1 Cor. i. 30. His blood cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John i. 7. Were we dead in trespasses and sin? He quickened us. Ephes. ii. 1. Were we far off from God? Christ has brought us nigh by his blood. Ephes. ii. 13. Were we as sheep gone astray? He came to seek and to save us when lost; therefore we are now returned to Him, the great shepherd and bishop of our souls. 1 Pet. ii. 25. Are we weary and heavy laden sinners? He invites us to come unto him, and promises to give rest and refreshment to our souls. Matt. xi. 28. Are we surrounded by enemies? We are more than conquerors, through him who loved us. Rom. viii. 37. Do we groan under a body of sin and death? Thank God, we have deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. vii. 24, 25. Do we fear death? Christ is our resurrection and our life. John xi. 25. Do we fear falling away from Christ, through sin which worketh in us, satan, who is against us, or that this present evil world, with all its deceitful snares, should prevail over and destroy us? Behold, he says, I give unto my sheep eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. John x. 28. Thus to commemorate him, who is all in all to us, is to keep his sabbaths in faith, to the honour and glory of him, in love. And, while we are reading, hearing, and meditating on him, or communicating with him at his table, he will bless us with his rest, make our souls joyful in his love and salvation, and our hearts happy in his power. Therefore he saith, My sabbaths ye shall keep.

O my fellow sinners, we have all had fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. We well know what it is to enter into the spirit of them, to have our hearts set upon them, our affections attached to them, and our spirits delighted with them,

so as to want nothing more, or better, to make us happy. Ah, most fatal delusion ! But, as truly as we have heretofore experienced such wretched fellowship, so now, in keeping the Lord's sabbaths in the Spirit of him, and holy unto him, we shall experience the holy joy of fellowship with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

INFERENCE.

Is it so, that the Lord thus commands us to keep his sabbaths ? Then, however vile we may see and know ourselves to be, though imperfection is wrote upon all we are and do, yet we may comfortably conclude that the Lord abounds in love, grace, mercy, and goodness to us. The more confidently we believe this, and the more steadily we are confirmed in this, the more it will draw out our hearts and affections to him ; and the greater delight we shall find in him, in his holy commands, his gracious truths, his precious promises, and his heavenly ways. For all will knit our hearts closer to him, that we may find more sweet peace from him, more joyful rest in him, and more happy fellowship with him. Satan may accuse us as he did Job, Do we serve the Lord for nought ? Indeed we do not. For we reap large wages *in*, though not *for*, our works of obedience. There is a certain selfishness in the ways of the Lord's people which is not criminal, but laudable to cultivate and improve; even to enjoy more and more sweet fellowship with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ in his appointed ways. Here, we can neither be too selfish, nor too covetous. For, it is heaven in the soul, and glory in possession. And, so sure as we prize this, we shall keep the Lord's sabbaths, that we may enjoy this upon earth, till he calls us to keep an eternal sabbath of rest with him in glory. Amen.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, the spirit of all truth, graciously be pleased to enlighten our minds to see, that every institution of thine is for the glory of thee, and for the good of our souls. Teach us, in thy every command, to view covenant love, and gospel grace, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Grant, O heavenly Father, that in the faith of him, being accepted in him, thy beloved, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, we may joyfully keep holy thy sabbaths : wait upon thee, in the use of all the means of grace : the ordinances of thy sacred word : that we may adorn our holy profession, magnify thy blessed name, exalt thy rich grace, and enjoy the earnest of our heavenly inheritance in our hearts, of which thy sabbaths are a blessed type, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Second Lord's Day.

THE REASON FOR KEEPING THE SABBATHS.

Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep, for it is a sign between me and you. Exod. xxxi. 13.

SOLOMON says, The wise in heart will receive commandments. Prov. x. 8. They will receive them in a right spirit, observe them from right principles, and keep them to a right end. Who is wise in heart? Every one whom the Lord makes so. Observe, in the 6th verse of this chapter, the Lord declares, "In the hearts of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom." May this remind you and me of our natural ignorance and folly, that we may be ever humble before the Lord. O that we may constantly consider this precious truth, Christ of God is made unto us *Wisdom*, that we may ever glory in the Lord. 1 Cor. i. 30. For we are in ourselves utterly destitute of all spiritual wisdom in the things of God. Yet vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt. Job xi. 12. No one image in nature could possibly be set before us, more clearly to represent our natural obstinacy and stupidity, than a wild ass's colt. As we enjoy not one single ray of light but what proceeds from the sun, so we possess not one single grain of spiritual wisdom, until it be communicated to us out of the fulness of Christ. Therefore, every man without Christ is in total darkness, and extreme ignorance, as to spiritual things. But when Christ is made wisdom to our souls, then, and not till then, are we light in the Lord, and made wise unto salvation. Then we evidence it, by keeping the Lord's sabbaths, which is a sign between him and us.

Let us consider this sign, what is implied by it, and contained in it. The Lord's sign is some outward token, or symbol, to represent somewhat intended by it. Thus, the rainbow in the heavens was a sign or token of the Lord's covenant. Gen. ix. 12, 13. Circumcision was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith; and of this righteousness being imputed to ungodly sinners, to make them righteous, and for their justification unto eternal life, according to the covenant grace of JEHOVAH. Water, in baptism, is the Lord's instituted sign, as an outward and visible representation of his inward and spiritual grace. It at once exhibits to us our state of pollution; that we need cleansing; and that God will graciously cleanse our souls, by the washing of regeneration. And bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be

received in his supper, are the signs and tokens of his blessed body, which was crucified for us, and of his precious blood which was shed for our sins. And thus the sabbath is a *sign* to us, that the Lord, who created us by his power, is in covenant with us by his grace, hath obtained rest for our souls, and rests in his love to us. And as he hath set apart the sabbath for a remembrance of his creating power, and redeeming love: so it is a *sign* between him and us, that he hath sanctified and set us apart as his peculiar people, formed for his service, and framed for his glory. And by keeping his sabbaths as he commands, in remembrance of him, and holy unto him, we hereby give a *sign*, evidence, and proof of our knowledge of him, faith in him, love to him, and that we seek no rest, peace, and comfort to our souls, but from him *only*. O these signs are precious love-tokens between our gracious Lord and our believing hearts! In observing and keeping them, we enjoy the sweet experience of this.

But see, in this 31st chapter of Exodus, the Lord's particular calling of Bezaleel, Aholiab, and all who were wise-hearted, in whom the Lord had put the spirit of wisdom, to make all that he had commanded, namely, the tabernacle of the congregation, the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat, &c. ver. 7, 8, 9. Why all this? What was the Lord's intent and end in all this? See we nothing of our precious Saviour prefigured in all this? Surely we must, if we attend to what St. Paul saith. For he expressly tells us, These things served only as a pattern, example, and type of heavenly things. Heb. viii. 5. They were only a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ. Col. ii. 19. Hence it is most clear and evident, that the sabbath was instituted, and was to be kept as a sign, emblem, or earnest, that the same Lord who created all things by the word of his power, and rested from that work on the sabbath; would also tabernacle in our flesh, finish the work of salvation for us in our nature; enter into his rest as our forerunner, that we might find rest to our souls in him, who is an ark of safety for us to flee unto, and a mercy-seat for us poor sinners boldly to come unto, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. iv. 16.

What a blessed sign hath the Lord of all grace constituted between himself and us miserable sinners, us needy creatures! O may the return of every sabbath sweetly remind us of him, of his precious love, and glorious salvation, that we may find rest in him to our weary souls. For, verily he is our rest. We keep not the seventh day, as was at first commanded; but what St. Paul calls *another day*, Heb. iv. 8. even the first day of the week. For, upon this day, a new and blessed æra of life

and salvation commenced; and therefore we keep this day, as a sign of, and in commemoration that Christ has finished salvation for us, and, by his resurrection from the dead, hath freely confirmed it to us. Now, for the establishing our minds in the truth, and for confirming our faith in Jesus, who is the end and substance of every legal institution, let us briefly consider these types, patterns, or shadows, here commanded to be made by him, as figures of him who was to come, and to be all that to us which these shadowed forth.

1st. Here is the tabernacle of the congregation, ver. 7. The place where the people of God were to assemble to perform their religious exercises, offer their services, and worship the Lord their God. Nothing can be plainer than that this was a type of Christ's human nature, wherein God dwells really, substantially, and personally; an infallible expositor has fully determined this point. He calls Christ's body, "a great and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands." Heb. ix. 11. The true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. Heb. viii. 2. This was Christ's human nature, which was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. O what inexpressible glory shines in this tabernacle. When the Holy Ghost, who formed it, enlightens sinners to see it, then they behold the glory of it. For, to this tabernacle he gathers us sinners, brings our hearts into sweet union to Christ, and happy communion with him, according as it is promised—unto him, (the Son of God tabernacling in our flesh) shall the gathering of the people be. Gen. xlix. 10. He shall gather together in ONE, (this one tabernacle of Christ's flesh) the children of God, (all the elect of God) who were scattered abroad. John xi. 52. Are we gathered by the power of the holy Ghost into this glorious tabernacle? O what ravishing blessings and comforts do we find in it! Here we worship with a holy boldness, and approach with assured access to God: to God the Father, our Father, reconciled to us, at peace with us, ever loving us, and bestowing his love upon us, in Jesus. In whom we have sweet access to him, holy boldness before him, precious communications from him: all flowing to us through that new and living way, of the vail of Christ's flesh, which he hath consecrated for us to draw nigh unto God. Heb. x. 20. In this tabernacle of Christ's flesh, the holy Ghost testifies of the love of Christ to us, the work of Christ for us, and bears witness to our spirits, that we are *in* him, *one* with him, united to him, and that all which Christ did and suffered in our flesh, was for us, and that he has done as God-man, Mediator, Saviour; and surely all is ours in time, and shall be to all eternity. O what a blessed sign is the sabbath, between the Lord, who tabernacled in our flesh, and us! Let us then keep his sabbaths in the faith of this.

2d. In this tabernacle was the ark of the testimony, or covenant. Christ is the ark of safety for us, and the covenant of all grace to us. Jehovah says of Christ, in our nature, I will give thee for a covenant for the people. Isai. xlii. 6. He has performed all covenant conditions in our behalf, as our covenant head and surety; fulfilled all covenant engagements in our stead; and obtained all covenant blessings for us. Hence that precious declaration, The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us, with all spiritual blessings *in Christ*, according as he hath chosen us *in him*, before the foundation of the world. Eph. i. 3. O the joy of this; as the testimony or covenant was put into the ark of the tabernacle, for safety and security, so we are put into Christ, in whom we are safe and secure from all dangers, and from every enemy. And, not only so, but as the Lord blessed Obed-Edom, and all his house, because the ark was with him. 2 Sam. vi. 11. So he blesses us in all things, because we are in Christ, and Christ is in us. O may we then keep his sabbaths as a memorial of this.

3d. There behold the mercy-seat, or propitiatory: The type of Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. Rom. iii. 25. The mercy-seat was overshadowed by the cherubim of glory. Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. 1 John ii. 2. God is glorious in mercy, in pardoning our sins, through the propitiation of Christ, and glory to God in the highest is given, by pardoned sinners. The holy Ghost appointed this mercy-seat to typify Christ, as our propitiation: he testifies of Christ in the gospel, as our one atonement for sin: by faith having now received this atonement, we joy in God, through Jesus Christ. Rom. v. 11. How joyful to keep his sabbaths in the faith of this!

4th. Here was the table, on which was placed the shew-bread, ver. 8. This represented Christ, who says, I am the bread of life—the bread which came down from heaven—He who eateth of this bread shall live for ever. John vi. 41. Have we tasted the sweetness of this bread? Have our souls been nourished and comforted by it? O may we hunger more and more after it, and be constantly crying, Lord, ever more give us this bread. Then we shall keep his sabbaths, that we may hear of Christ, and feed upon him in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving.

5th. The altar of burnt-offering, typical of the one offering and burnt sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who went through the fire of divine justice, and was scorched to death, by a hell of sufferings for our sins, and who, by his one offering, hath for ever put away our sins, and by his one offering of his body, hath for ever perfected all them who are sanctified. Heb. x. 10. O, believer, amidst all the black catalogue of thy enormous sins,

there is not one sin left for thee to answer for before God, but all, and every one, are for ever put away from the sight of God. Thou art for ever freed from condemnation, from all sin before God, just as though thou hadst never committed any one sin. O what relief doth this bring to the conscience ! How happy doth the faith of this make the hearts of us poor sinners ! Can we say in faith and truth, of the sacrifice of Christ,

My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice besides ?

Then we shall joyfully keep his sabbaths in remembrance of this.

6th. Here were the holy garments of the priests, to appear in before the Lord. These remind us of Jesus the great high-priest of our profession, who appears in the presence of God for us, in garments of perfect holiness and righteousness, to represent our persons, to present his sacrifice, to make intercession, and to save unto the uttermost, all who come unto God by him. Heb. vii. 25. He bears the names of all his dear people on his breast-plate of love. He is a high-priest of good things to them. O let us keep the feast of his sabbaths in the joy of this !

7th. Here was the anointing oil, to signify the unction of the Spirit, by which Christ was anointed, to be a king and a priest, unto God for us ; and by which all his redeemed ones are anointed, and made kings and priests unto God. Rev. i. 6. And unto whom they offer spiritual sacrifices by Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 5. Here was also the sweet incense, for the holy place, ver. 11, typifying the offering and sacrifice of Christ, as being of a sweet-smelling savour unto God for us. Eph. v. 2. This sweetly perfumes, and renders perfectly acceptable to God, both our persons and our services. O let us keep the Lord's sabbaths, in remembrance that Christ, by his own blood, hath entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Heb. ix. 12.

Lastly. Here was the candlestick, made of pure gold. emblematical of the everlasting gospel, which holds forth the light of the free grace of God, and full salvation by the Son of his love. Was this candlestick of pure gold, without any alloy ? It represents the purity of the gospel. Is gold the most valuable metal ? The gospel is of infinite value : every word of it is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Ps. xix. 10. This candlestick had three branches on each side, besides the middle stem, which made up the perfect number seven, denoting the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Rom. xv. 29. All the fulness that dwells in Christ. Col. i.

19. And that he is the fulness, who filleth all in all. Eph. i. 23. All the glorious doctrines of the gospel, point to, and centre in Christ: and all the precious promises of it are in Christ, yea and amen to the glory of God. As this candlestick gave light in the tabernacle, so the gospel holds forth Christ, who is the light of the world, and the light of men. Thus we see what a precious sign the sabbaths are, between our gracious Lord and us miserable sinners. O how ought we to prize them, keep them, and sanctify them, in obedience to his command, and in commemoration of his love, of what he is to us, and hath done for us!

INFERENCE.

Hence we conclude, that Christ is the sum and substance of the Old Testament, as well as the New. All the gospel grace and love of him, are held forth under legal types, figures, and institutions. Therefore, for the confirming our faith, and establishing our hope in him, he commands us, Search the scriptures (the law, the prophets, and the psalms) for they are they which testify of me. John v. 39. O, say many, we cannot understand the Old Testament. Why? because you do not read it in the light of Christ, see Christ in every page of it, and consider it as the history of him, and his dealings with, and appearance for, and to his peculiarly beloved people of old. But you are led to conceive of some other God, besides him, not considering that **GOD IS IN CHRIST**. 2 Cor. iv. 19. For thus saith [Jesus] the **LORD**, the King of Israel, and his [Israel's] *Redeemer*, the Lord of Hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God. Isai. xlv. 6. And says Christ, I and my Father are one: one and the same **GOD**. John x. 30. And I am in the Father, and the Father in me. He who hath seen me hath seen the Father. John xiv. 9. 10. O there is a sad vail of ignorance and unbelief upon our hearts, concerning this precious point, that we do not see it clearly, nor believe it comfortably, although it is revealed so plainly, that he who runs may read. For, says our Lord, Moses wrote of me. John v. 46. And Abraham rejoiced to see my day. viii. 5, 6. But instead of simply believing it, as we do any truth that is told us by a man of veracity, we foolishly cry out, how can it be! and vainly attempt to bring the existence of infinite Deity into our finite and shallow comprehension, and want perfectly to understand it before we will credit it. Here is the pride of the devil, instead of the humility of the saint. Ye shall be as Gods, saith satan. Gen. iii. 11. We believe his lie, instead of crediting God's truth. And instead of searching the scriptures humbly, which testify of Jesus, the true God and eternal life. 1 John v. 20. We search proudly into what

GOD has not revealed, and what is not an object, either of our faith, or our inquiry, namely, the nature of the existence of the Godhead. It is enough for a sober mind, and a simple heart, that thus it is written ; so it is revealed. I take GOD's word, and I am satisfied with its truth. I firmly believe it, because GOD hath plainly revealed it. This, and no other, is the faith of GOD's elect. This faith makes a happy heart, and a holy life. It is enough, yea, it is fully sufficient, that we are divinely assured, "There are Three that bear record in heaven, The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : And these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood ; and these three agree in one." 1 John v. 7, 8. As these three are one in essence, so they are one in mind and will, and agree to, and have bore record from heaven, to this one precious truth, that there is salvation in Jesus for sinners, and in no other ; therefore, "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of GOD is greater." This is the witness which GOD hath bore from heaven to Christ in our nature, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mat. iii. 17. As if he had said, there is no character on earth, that I am well pleased with, but my beloved Son's only. I love and delight in none of the sons of men, but as they are IN him. Are you in Christ ? Do you delight in him ? Are you well pleased with him ? If so, you have the heart of a child of GOD, and may look through Jesus to GOD your Father, and rejoice in him. "For he who hath the Son, hath life," the life of God in his soul. 1 John v. 12.

A COLLECT.

O LORD Jesu Christ, who art the sinner's only hope, glory to thy precious name, that thou hast given us such a blessed sign between thee and us, as thy sabbaths, and hast made our observation of them, a sign of our knowledge of thee, faith in thee, and love to thee. O grant that our every sabbath may be blessed by thy holy Spirit, to increase this knowledge, faith, and love in our hearts : that we may be more and more devoted to thee in life. O that out of thy fulness, thou anointed Saviour, we may daily receive grace upon grace, till we are filled out of thy fulness of grace, peace, and love on earth, and taken up to the full enjoyment of thy presence in heaven, to the glory of the Father's love in thee, thy salvation of us, and GOD the Spirit's influence upon us. Amen.

The Third Lord's Day.

THE BLESSED END OF KEEPING THE SABBATH.

Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep---that ye may know that I am the Lord, who doth sanctify you. Exod. xxxi. 13.

HEAR the natural language of all your hearts, and tremble before the Lord. When will the sabbath be gone? Amos viii. 5. It is quite agreeable to our corrupt nature, and carnal reason, to say of the sabbaths, as was said of the precious ointment, which was poured on Christ's head, "to what purpose is this waste?" Matt. xxvi. 8. For we naturally think the observation of the sabbath is waste of time: it is weariness to us. So foolish are we and ignorant, as a beast before the Lord. Ps. lxxiii. 22. But, good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach—who? good, righteous, pious people, who never offended him? He can find no such upon the earth. But the Lord will teach (such as you and I are) *SINNERS* in the way. Ps. xxv. 8. This is our mercy. He loves *sinners*, therefore he will teach them the way everlasting. The Lord is gracious to *sinners*. He pities our folly. He delivers us from our ignorance. He saves us from our sins. He sanctifies our souls. He makes us wise unto salvation: and when made spiritually wise, then we judge all things. 1 Cor. ii. 15. We judge of the expediency of the sabbath, and the Lord's love to our souls, in the institution of it. We see it our privilege to obey it, and delight to keep it, with spiritual views, and to spiritual ends. For, we consider the sabbaths as an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace signified by it, sanctification. This is a sure evidence of a sanctified heart. Under the influence of grace, such are ready to say, O that very day was as a sabbath of rest to our souls, so that we might meet with no interruption from worldly concerns, but be wholly engaged in waiting upon, worshipping of, rejoicing in, enjoying sweet fellowship with, and being entirely devoted to, the God of our salvation! But, O, how do the objects of time and sense divert our souls from the one thing needful, so that through the intrusion of these we sometimes question whether we know the Lord, fear the Lord, love and serve the Lord; and are ready to doubt, whether he hath sanctified us to himself or not. Well, blessed be God, there remaineth an eternal rest for us in glory. This we enter upon by faith now. Our sabbaths on earth are a type and earnest of it. And so sure, as we keep them by faith, and in love to our Lord, we shall enjoy rest in him now, and eternal rest with him in heaven. O the joy of this! Our dear Lord,

ever loving, and ever gracious to us, would have us be ever happy in the knowledge of himself ; therefore he hath instituted the sabbaths, that, in keeping them, we may enjoy the comfort of knowing him as our Lord, and rejoicing in him as our sanctifier. This is the blessed end we are now to consider. 1st. Sanctification. 2d. The knowledge of the Lord as our sanctifier. O may the Lord so help us to meditate on these, that our knowledge of him may be comfortably enlarged, our joy of faith in him sensibly strengthened, our delight of hope towards him abound, our love to him inflamed, and our devotion to him increased.

1st. As to Sanctification. This implies separation, and pollution. We are naturally in a state of alienation, or separation from God. Our iniquities have separated between us and our God. Isai. lix. 2. We are entirely separated from all knowledge of God, love for him, fear of him, and devotion of heart to him ; and are only devoted to common uses, as men, and unclean purposes, as sinners. Now, when the Lord is graciously pleased to sanctify any such sinners of mankind, he separates and sets them apart for his own use, service, and glory. They are no longer common or unclean, but are vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master's use ; 2 Tim. ii. 21. Thus were all the vessels of the sanctuary sanctified, separated, or set apart, for holy uses. Levit. viii. 11. Or, as the Lord sanctifies, and sets apart the sabbath, from the other days of the week, for holy purposes, so he sanctifies a sinner, separates him from his former state, and the rest of his fellow sinners, and sets him apart for himself. Such are called vessels of mercy, which God had afore prepared for glory. Rom. ix. 23. For the Lord, in the love of his heart, the choice of his will, and the purpose of his grace, separated and set apart these vessels of mercy from before the foundation of the world, having predestinated them to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself. Eph. i. 15. So Paul says, It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me. Gal. i. 15, 16. So every sanctified soul is also thus separated by the pleasure of God, called by his grace, [though not so highly exalted as to be an apostle of God, yet so greatly distinguished as to be a holy Christian to the Lord, and therefore] God also reveals his Son in them.

O this sanctification, separation, or setting apart a sinner, by God, calling him by his grace, and revealing his Son in him, is a most highly distinguished favour ! For, all such are separated from the world which lieth in wickedness, from their former wretched state of sin, wrath, and curse, from their sinful practices, self-righteous hopes, and vain confidences, and are set apart to God, for his use, service, and glory. 'God delights in

them, and they delight in God. God views them in Christ, and they view God in him, as revealed *in them*. God rejoices over them, to do them good. They rejoice in God, as their hope, their portion, and their all. God is pleased to institute his sabbaths, to be kept by them, and they are pleased with the due observation of them. Thus it appears that, like Paul, they are chosen, separated, sanctified vessels unto Christ, to receive out of his fulness, to contain, and retain, the heavenly treasure of his grace, peace, and love, faith on him, love to him, and delight in him. For God, having sanctified, or separated them, from others, and Christ being revealed in them, the hope of glory, therefore, they sanctify, or separate, the Lord God in their hearts from all idols. 1 Pet. iii. 15. And, all this is effected upon them, because they are the beloved and chosen of God, from the beginning, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto belief of the truth. 2 Thess. ii. 13. But is this all that the Lord does upon his beloved, chosen people? Is this all that is meant by the Lord's sanctifying them? No, For,

Secondly, Sanctification implies pollution in the subject, and love in the agent. We are the subjects of pollution: the Lord is the sanctifier of us. If we were not polluted, we need not to be sanctified. If the Lord did not love us, he would take no thought about us, nor pains to sanctify us. All that the Lord does for, and in his people, springs from his love to them, and issues in the glory of him. But here is the amazing mystery of godliness, that the Lord, who is in all his persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, infinitely holy, of purer eyes than to behold the least iniquity, and perfectly abhors all sin, should yet love such abominable, filthy, polluted wretches as we all are: full of nothing but the leprosy of sin, and overspread with the stench of corruption, so as even to stink in his very nostrils. Yea, that he should so love us as to wash and cleanse us in his own blood from our sins, sanctify us by his own Spirit, and make us fit to enjoy fellowship with him on earth, and meet for his presence in heaven. O wonder of love! O miracle of grace! O astonishing mercy! Study it on your knees, in silent adoration. What shall we say to it? What reason assign for it? How account for it? Behold the cause of it,—**THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL.** See the reason for it,—**HE HATH MADE US ACCEPTED IN HIS BELOVED SON.** Hear the end of it,—**TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE.** O what a blessed cause! what a joyful reason! what a glorious end! These are assigned by the Spirit, why the Lord should sanctify any of the polluted race of apostate Adam. Ephes. i. 5, 6. O how blessed, to be the happy subject of this sanctification, of which the Lord is the gracious agent!

2nd. Man has separated himself from God: he has polluted

himself before God; but no man is either willing to return unto God, or able to sanctify himself unto God. Both are the work of the almighty Jehovah, and of no other. **I AM THE LORD WHO DOTHT SANCTIFY YOU.** But how doth the Lord effect this cleansing us from our pollution? By blood divine, and grace almighty. In one word, he washes us from our sins in his blood; and unites us to his Son by his Spirit: by this, and no other way, doth the Lord sanctify us. We are washed, and are sanctified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 11. and we enjoy the blessedness and comfort of this by faith. For, as we received a polluted nature, from the first Adam, we partake of a new and holy nature from the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, by union to him, and communion with him. For, both he which sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one. Heb. ii. 11. Christ's holiness is as really communicated to us, as Adam's pollution is inherited by us. See, then, sin in its root, and pollution as its fruit. See also sanctification in its root, and holiness as its fruit. But we are prone to look for the root of sanctification in ourselves, and its fruits in our flesh, or fallen nature; and because we see sin in us, and pollution cleaving to us, therefore we think that the Lord has not sanctified our souls at all. But we are renewed or sanctified in the spirit of our minds. And if we have learned Christ, have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, we are to put off concerning the former conversation [judging of ourselves after the flesh, talking of ourselves, how holy we have made ourselves, what holiness we have got in ourselves, for this is] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; therefore, put on the new man, which after [the image of] God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Ephes. iv. 20, &c. What is this new man, but the second Adam, the Lord from heaven; Jesus the Son of God, and the Son of man, into whom we are new born by the power of the Spirit, in whom we are new creatures? 2 Cor. vii. 14. And who of God is made unto us sanctification. 1 Cor. i. 30. This is our faith. From hence proceeds our holiness of heart, lip, and life. And we are to put on the new man continually, by the faith of our hearts, in the judgment of our minds, by the choice of our wills, and the disposition of our affections, for all the purposes of a holy life. We are to reckon ourselves after Christ, and to judge of ourselves as we are in him, united to him, and members of him. Is Christ beloved of God? so are we *in him*. Is Christ righteous before God? so are we *in him*. Is Christ perfectly holy in the sight of God? so are we *in him*. Is Christ accepted by God? so are we *in him*. Is Christ without spot of sin, in the presence of God? so are we *in him*. Has Christ a

title to the heavenly inheritance? so have we *in him*. Hear what he says from heaven, of what he calls us *gentile sinners* by his gospel, to partake of,—That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith, which is *IN ME*. Acts xxvi. 18.

This is the new conversation of the Lord's sanctified people, which they are to put on daily. Peter calls it a good conversation in Christ. 1 Pet. iii. 16. It is a conversation which becometh the gospel. Phil. i. 20. A holy and heavenly conversation. For Jesus, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is the end of this conversation. Heb. xiii. 8. And it is a true conversation, taught us by the true gospel, and witnessed by the Spirit of truth. For, we are the holy children of a holy God, by a holy faith in Christ Jesus. Gal. iii. 26. That moment we are born again of the Spirit, we believe in Jesus, and are partakers of his holy nature. Yea, he is our life of sanctification. And that moment we believe in Jesus, we are born again of the Spirit, are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and made holy unto God. Not only are our sins pardoned by God, our souls cleansed from all sin, in the blood of the Son of God, and our persons justified before God, but our souls are sanctified unto God, made meet to enjoy fellowship with God on earth, and his presence in heaven. Thus are we sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And as an evidence of this, our holy, heavenly-begotten, new-born souls, love holiness, and hate sin, delight in communion with God, and abhor fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. We are sanctified by the Spirit, to live upon the fulness of Christ, and to receive out of his fulness, grace upon grace, that we may be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness: following after holiness, yea perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, with heaven in our view, and Christ's righteousness our title to it in our hearts. For, after all, let us remember to our Lord's glory, and our joy of faith in him, that our sanctification does not gain us a title to heaven: neither does our holiness of life, walk, and conversation, sanctify and make us holy; but proceeds from our being sanctified in the Lord, and by the Lord. *I AM THE LORD, WHO DO TH SANCTIFY YOU*. And when the Lord hath sanctified us, we have the fruits and evidences of it. Being made holy, we walk holily; we bring forth the *fruits* of righteousness, Phil. i. 11; and have our *fruit* unto holiness. Rom. vi. 22. Pray mind this, and do not confound the root with the fruit, nor the cause with its effects; ever keep them distinct in view, but ever united in experience. And never, no never forget, our dear Lord's almost last words, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples, clearly manifest, and enjoy full evidence,*

that ye are my true disciples, and real followers. John xv. 8. Worthy, for ever worthy is the Lord, to be thus glorified by us. O may we bring forth more and more of the fruits of righteousness, and fruits unto holiness, to the glory of him who hath sanctified us: separated us to himself by his Spirit, and cleansed us from our natural pollution in his own blood. To know this LORD, as our sanctifier, is the

Second point for our meditation. Now, this knowledge implies much more than to know it as a truth in the head, and to assent to it in the understanding, as being taught us in a natural way by men and books. But it means, to have such a knowledge of it as enters into the comfort of our hearts, engages our affections unto the Lord, causes our very soul to delight itself in him, and to devote itself unto him. It is such a blessed knowledge of the Lord, as our sanctifier, which expels the darkness of ignorance from our minds, the clouds of error from our understanding, and doubts and perplexities from our judgments, concerning our state. For, by this knowledge we are made light in the Lord; and know ourselves, even as we are known by the Lord. But, is not this the common privilege of all God's sanctified people? Doubtless. But do they all partake of this comfortable knowledge? No. Many, very many are destitute of it, go in sad doubts and perplexing fears about it. But why? Various reasons may be assigned. Two may suffice: Carelessness and ignorance. 1st. They not wholly living by faith upon Christ, walking close with Christ, keeping his commandments, and following his steps. Then it is no wonder, if such are destitute of the comfortable knowledge of the Lord, as their sanctifier. For all comfortable knowledge of the Lord is enjoyed in the way of believing in, and obeying the Lord. See to this, follow on more intensely to know the Lord; ye shall keep my sabbaths, that ye may know that I am the Lord, who doth sanctify you.

2d. Through ignorance, every sanctified soul is still a sinner, in a body of sin, and is the subject of a nature which is unholy, for in his flesh dwells no good thing. Rom. vii. 18. And every evil is continually working in it, and proceeding out of it. This darkens our views, clouds our understanding, and perplexes our judgment, concerning ourselves. And this makes us ever ready, in doubt and uncertainty, to ask, how it is possible that creatures so vile and unclean, who have sin in them, and sin cleaving to all they do, can think the Lord hath sanctified them? But this is breathing in the regions of nature, instead of the kingdom of grace: judging after the flesh, instead of after the Spirit. For, the groaning of such under this, is a full proof that the Lord hath sanctified them, and that they are partakers of a new nature in Christ. But

they cannot comfortably see this, till the Lord is pleased to make it manifest unto them. This is the case with many, very many of God's sanctified ones. For God to work upon the soul is one thing : comfortably to assure the soul, that it is the Lord's work, and to give the joy of it, is another ; as it is one thing to be alive, and another to enjoy health, and the comforts of life.

3d. I well remember the pain and distress of mind I felt, when the Lord first called me by the word of his grace, and the power of his Spirit, to believe in Christ, for want of knowing, that the Lord was my sanctifier, and that I was sanctified in Christ. Though through belief of the faith I found peace with God, and felt the sense of his pardoning love in Christ, yet, through the weakness of my understanding in gospel grace, and the mystery of godliness, a sight of my nature's pollution, and a sense of my manifold corruptions, and sitting under legal preaching, I was sorely distressed, lest after being justified by faith, I should be damned for not being sanctified : though my sins were pardoned in the blood of Christ, yet I trembled, lest I should perish for want of holiness : though saved from wrath by Christ, yet I trembled lest I should suffer wrath, because I was not a new creature in Christ. For I foolishly thought I was somehow or other to sanctify myself, and by my works of righteousness to obtain my own sanctification. This is the very essence of legality. This legal spirit cleaves to us all, and keeps many under the bondage of legal fears, slavish doubts, and racking perplexities, concerning their state. Judge then of the blessedness of clearly knowing that the LORD is our sanctifier. Conceive of the joy it must be to the soul to know this, not in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. O this is the greatest blessing, a sinner can enjoy on this side heaven. Study its importance. Pursue after its enjoyment. Remember what honour the Lord puts upon his sabbaths, that in keeping them we shall enjoy this blessed knowledge.

4th. Therefore, from everlasting covenant-love, and with a regard for our happiness, the Lord says, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep, to this very end, that ye may know that I am the Lord who doth sanctify you. If, with a sincere regard for the knowledge of the Lord, an humble dependence on him, a hearty desire to serve and please him, an eye to the glory of him, and with a view to enjoy fellowship with him, we keep his sabbaths, he hath declared, ye shall know, assuredly know, that I am the Lord who doth sanctify you. I will make this clear to your mind, and manifest to your conscience. Yea, our very desire to keep the Lord's sabbaths in a holy way, and spiritual manner, is a blessed evidence that he hath sanc-

tified us : that he hath put his fear in us, that his love constrains us, that his word influences us, and that his glory is regarded by us. And this we may be perfectly assured of: observation and experience fully confirm it, that all who conscientiously keep the Lord's sabbaths, in the faith and love of him, and with a desire to know and enjoy him, will live in his fear, walk in his truth, and devote themselves to his service and glory, all the other days of the week. As the Lord is regarded on his sabbaths, so will the rest of our days be spent. If the Lord's sabbaths are profaned, the rest of the week will be spent in ungodliness. This is a standing rule.

INFERENCE.

If so, how then must this blessed knowledge relieve our consciences, and support our minds, in this vale of tears, and under the sense and feeling of indwelling sin? If Jehovah is my sanctifier, sin shall not prove my destroyer. I am under his grace, therefore sin shall not have dominion over me. Rom. vi. 14. And, what a divine confidence, and holy boldness does this knowledge inspire the soul to go unto him for fresh supplies of his sanctifying influences. And what joyful reasoning does this knowledge furnish us with concerning our eternal salvation. See the glorious chain of it so inseparably linked together by the free grace of a sovereign and unchangeable Lord, that no power in earth, or hell, can disunite it. Pursue its glorious climax. Whom God did foreknow [as his own people, beloved, and chosen in Christ, and given to Christ, John xvii. 2.] he also did predestinate [to be conformed to the image of Christ, in righteousness and true holiness]. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, [by the word of his grace, and power of his Spirit, to believe on Christ, to be joined to him, to be one spirit with him, and to enjoy fellowship in the love of the Father in him] and whom he called, them he also justified, [in the righteousness of Christ from all condemnation] and whom he justified, them he also glorified, [with the Spirit of sanctification, and adoption here, and eternal glory hereafter. Rom. viii. 29, 30.] O the joy and blessedness of knowing this, in the power of the Spirit, through faith! What love to God, what joy in God, doth this inspire the hearts of poor sinners with! Is the Lord my sanctifier? Do I know it? Then how ought I to go on my way rejoicing? For if he saw fit, he could destroy the very being of sin in me, root, branch, and fruit. But though he does not, though sin is suffered to rage horribly in me, yet the Lord is mightier, and reigns in and over me, therefore sin shall not. It is under his omnipotent arm and sovereign control. My Saviour, who has taken the love of sin out of my heart, caused me to repent

of it, groan under it, mourn over it, strive with it, pray against it, and long to be delivered from it, so that I do not serve sin, will surely keep sin under my feet, till he has perfectly delivered me from its being, and brought me to where he is, to awake up in his perfect likeness, and to behold his face in glory.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, thou lover, Saviour, and sanctifier of sinners, incline our hearts so to keep thy sabbaths, and walk in all thy commandments and ordinances blameless, that we may know thy love, enjoy thy salvation, and feel thy sanctifying influences continually, to thy glory, and our comfort in Christ Jesus, Amen.

The Fourth Lord's Day.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY, IN TIME OF CALAMITY.

Call upon me in the Day of Trouble; and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm l. 15.

ALEXANDER, the great monarch of the world, was discontented because ivy would not grow in his garden at Babylon. While we read of another, who was over head and ears in debt, yet it never disturbed his rest, but he always slept soundly on his bed. An emperor hearing of this, ordered his servants to procure that bed at any price; for, says he, there certainly must be some very peculiar quality in it. We may justly apply this to God's blessed word: for though we are all insolvent, bankrupt sinners, yet there is such a peculiar quality in the bible, as to give rest and composure to our troubled and uneasy spirits. Yea, there is not one trouble or distress of mind, body, or estate, but what we have a sovereign remedy for in the word of grace and truth. Happy is that soul in whom the word of Christ dwells richly. We have here, 1st, A loving command. 2nd, A precious promise; and, 3d, A gracious declaration. May the Lord be pleased, graciously to assist us in meditating on each of these, in his loving fear, that our souls may get spiritual profit; and praise and glory ascend from our hearts unto him.

1st. The command, *Call upon me in the day of trouble.* Who speaks thus? To whom is this spoken? and why is this spoken? It is of great moment to consider these points attentively. 1st. Who speaks? God you say. True. But what God? Some great and almighty being at a mighty distance from us, whom we conceive of, without knowing any thing of his name, his nature, and his perfections; to us an unknown God? indeed it should seem so, by the language, praying, writing, and preaching of many. Strange ignorance of God is manifest, even in this day of the clearest revelation which God has made of himself in Christ. Old Testament saints, possessed much clearer knowledge of God than many New Testament professors. They saw clearly by types and figures, that God stood in a precious relation to them; and they knew him, and could approach unto him. But not as an absolute God, as many talk of now, and ascribe to him, such a set of attributes and perfections as just suit their corrupt minds.

For, the title of this psalm is, "The majesty of God in the church. His order to gather saints," &c. The psalm begins, The mighty God, the LORD: El, Elohim, Jehovah, the three-

one God in covenant hath spoken, &c. God never speaks to sinners but in Christ, by whom he is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. 2 Cor. v. 19. Nor can guilty sinners know him, hear him, approach unto and love him, but in Christ. To all who are out of Christ, God is a consuming fire. Therefore he says, gather *my* saints together unto *me*, those who have made a covenant with *me* by sacrifice, ver. 5, even the one sacrifice of his beloved Son : of which all the burnt-offerings and sacrifices were only typical. Therefore here is a covenant God speaking to his believing people, and giving them this loving command, Call upon me, your covenant God, and loving Father in Christ. Thus we see who speaks, Jehovah, and to whom he speaks, even to his covenant saints, gathered to him in Christ, unto whom the gathering of the people shall be. Gen. xlix. 10. And who believed in, and looked to him, who was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb. ix. 26. This he hath perfectly, and for ever done, and is now for ever sat down at the right hand of God. Lo this is our God, and our eyes look up to him.

3d. Why does the Lord command, call upon *me* in trouble ? 1st. We may conceive of it by way of reproof. For we are very prone to flee to, trust in, and call upon other objects in time of trouble. The physician's skill, the friend's counsel, or the creature's aid, too often supplant the LORD in our minds, and leave but half the heart for God. This is dishonouring to him, and distressing to us. Thus he tenderly expostulates, what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come ? to whom will ye flee for help ? and where will ye leave your glory ? Isai. x. 3. Yea, he says, woe to them, who go down to Egypt for help ; and stay on horses, [the strength of creatures] and trust in chariots [the grand appearance in nature] because they are many, &c. [have power to deliver, according to human judgment] but they look not unto the holy one of Israel, neither seek the LORD. Isa. xxxi. 1. Therefore he tenderly reproves, while he lovingly commands, call upon ME.

2d. This command is to excite confidence in God in the day of trouble, as being near to us under all our troubles. I am a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off. Jer. xxiii. 23. O the supporting confidence this yields in the day of trouble ! Comforts are nearest, when afflictions are at the highest. The God of all comforts is nigh unto all who call upon him. He will hear their cry and will save them. Psal. cxlv. 18, 19. We cannot have a trouble but he sees, a sorrow but he knows, an infirmity but he is touched with the tender feeling of. Heb. iv. 15. True, all appearances may seem

against us, and the Lord absent from us. But shall we judge from appearances, and not rather believe the Lord's word, and obey his command? Call upon me. It might seem strange to the eye of reason, when the guests wanted wine at the marriage feast at *Cana*, he bids them fetch water. Cold comfort, when wine was expected. Yet wine was nearest, when only water was present. God works all things after the counsel of his own will, even by contraries: as light out of darkness, at the creation. Life out of death, glory out of shame, in our redemption. The blind man's sight, out of clay and spittle. Yea, heaven out of hell; for when he exalts his children to the heaven of his love, he casts them first down, to a hell of distress in their consciences. He first humbles, and then exalts. He is equally near in both. His hand effects both. He afflicts, that we may profit. He suffers troubles to excite prayer, and to bring us in view and comfort near to himself. Therefore, be not discouraged, though he pours ever so much water of affliction upon you, for he is near to turn it all into the wine of consolation to you. Hence he commands, call upon ME.

3d. This command implies love to, and care for us in our troubles. If a friend says, whenever you are in any distress or trouble, call upon me. This strikes us with an affecting sense of his love to, and care for us; yea, and what boldness doth it also inspire our hearts with? And if he is a great and mighty person, what comfort and support doth it yield us? But in our troubles we call our sins to remembrance. That is good. We mourn and grieve on account of them. That is right. We think God is so provoked by them, that he will have nothing to do with us. That is bad. We fear he will not hear our cry, nor help us, though we do call upon him. That is worse. Yea, we think he has no love for our souls, nor care for our troubles. Worse and worse. Yea, we dread he hath cast us off for ever. This is worst of all. Surely, satan, like the toad squatted at Eve's ears, in Milton, is injecting his hellish lies into your mind, in opposition to God's truths and his glory. But in direct contradiction to all this, the Lord says, Call upon me in the day of trouble. Let your troubles be what they may, of what kind soever, whether of soul or body, spiritual or natural, personal or relative, I will know thy soul in adversity, therefore call upon me. And to put this matter beyond all doubt, and to administer strong consolation, to our Lord's loving command, he graciously adds,

Secondly, This precious promise, *I will deliver thee*. The promise is absolute. There is the will of sovereignty in it. The power, truth, and faithfulness of God, are pledged to fulfil it. This calls for faith and patience. Faith honours God,

by believing his word. Patience honors him, by looking to him, and waiting for his fulfilling it. A promise is the life of faith. Faith is the life of patience. Yea, faith supports patience, by calling in the aids of hope. Faith says, I have got a promise. The mighty GOD, the LORD, Jehovah in covenant, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, hath promised, I will deliver thee. Hope replies, this is good anchor-hold. I will wait and look; and command patience to attend. Patience replies, it is good that a man should both patiently hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of GOD. Lam. iii. 26. Here is a Trinity of persons in the promise, the love of GOD the Father, the grace of GOD the Son, and the influence of GOD the Spirit. Therefore these call forth this trinity of graces, FAITH, HOPE, and PATIENCE, to attend upon, trust in, hope on, and give glory to the promiser. O how gracious is the Lord to his people, in and under all their troubles! What support to them, as the Lord's WILL is engaged for them! *I will deliver thee.* Doth not the Lord do this greatly, even in our troubles, and though he suffers troubles to continue, by calling forth, and exercising these precious graces, faith, hope, and patience upon himself? Are we not hereby delivered, greatly delivered, from our natural fears, distresses, inquietudes and sorrows, on account of our troubles, as well as our minds amazingly fortified against them, and powerfully supported under them? O what a blessing is this from the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul, ought to be our constant language. For he hath divinely assured us, when thou passest through the waters, [of trouble and affliction] I will be with thee; and through the rivers, [deep, strong, and lasting troubles] they shall not overflow thee, [thou shalt swim safely and comfortably, supported by faith, hope, and patience in me] when thou walkest through the fire, [scorching afflictions] thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Thou shalt not get the least harm, nor suffer the least loss, by any, or all thy troubles. Why all this? O most blessed reason! For I am the LORD thy God, the holy one of Israel, THY SAVIOUR. Isai. xliii. 2, 3. Thus safe and blessed are the redeemed of the Lord, even in and under all their troubles!

I will deliver *thee*. Thou, who believest in me, criest to me, and callest upon me. I know thy voice. I have constantly heard it, when thou hast been in no trouble, only about thy sins, to have them pardoned, and subdued, and thy soul sanctified by me. And now thou art in trouble. Thy greatest trouble is, lest thou shouldest offend me, and thy chief concern how to behave under thy trouble and to profit by it. I will deliver *thee* from all thy fears, and out of all thy troubles. Every trouble has both a voice and a period. A voice to speak for thy profit. A good end to answer upon thee. And the trouble

shall not one moment exceed its fixed time. Like the refiner, the Lord stands by his people, to see how their troubles operate, to support under them, and at the proper time, to deliver out of them. O how sweet, how joyful, to eye the Lord, as ever looking on us, and ever present with us, in all our troubles! It will draw forth from the heart the words of Eli, in faith and submission, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. 1 Sam. iii. 18. Therefore, O afflicted soul, do as David did, encourage thyself in the Lord thy God. 1 Sam. xxx. 6. Did he say, seemeth it a light thing to be a king's son in law? 1 Sam. xviii. 23. Let it not be a light matter, but a most joyful thing to you, to be an adopted son of the most high God, the King of kings, by faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore, under all thy troubles, call to mind thy exalted, thy dignified state. Though thou dost suffer trouble like other men, as a poor sinner, yet remember that thou art a son of God, yea, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ. Rom. viii. 17.

An heir of God, and joint heir with Christ, most amazing words! The faith of this may troubles well endure. It would be presumption indeed, for such sinners as we are, to entertain the thought, if the Spirit of truth had not indited the words, and given us to believe on the Son of God in our hearts. But now it is shamefully dishonouring to God our Father, and to Christ our elder brother, to question our high birth, heavenly pedigree, and glorious heirship in God, and of God, in and with Christ: an heir, yea a joint heir with Christ of God: of all that he is in himself, and of all that he has to bestow, as a loving Father, and covenant God: earth with all its blessings, and heaven with all its glories. Well then may we say, joyfully say, we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose. Rom. viii. 28. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. We come

Thirdly, to consider the gracious declaration, "Thou shalt glorify me." This is the highest honour that a saint upon earth, or the highest angel in heaven, can attain to. And this is the grand end that the Lord himself has in all his works of providence, and by all his dispensations of grace to, and dealings with, his people. Though we can add nothing to God's essential glory, yet we can add much to the manifestation of his glory. Suppose an eminent physician attended you, under a very dangerous illness, and was made an instrument in the hand of God of restoring you to health: hence you publish his name, and proclaim his skill and judgment abroad in the

world, though you hereby add to his fame, and recommend him to others, yet you do not in the least add to his skill and judgment. Thus it is in glorifying God. It is to make his name, his fame, his honour, his power, goodness, and praise glorious in the earth. O this is delightful work to a grateful soul! And our gracious God is delighted with it, and glorified by it. For he says, whoso offereth praise glorifieth me. Psalm l. 24.

There is not a more subtile device of satan than this, to persuade us into a false notion of humility, and make us think, that seeing we are such vile, worthless beings as sinners, we are too low and insignificant for the great and mighty God to pay any regard to our works of praise, and grateful services. I have often felt the force of this injection. I doubt not but others have also. But, is it at all a question whom shall we believe and obey, the God of truth, or the father of lies? O let us reject satan's lies, and look to the God of all grace, for power to glorify him, with the love of our hearts, by entertaining the most high, honourable, loving, and gracious sentiments of him. To glorify him with our lips, by proclaiming his glorious name, telling of the wonders of his rich love, abundant mercy, free grace, and boundless goodness, to such undeserving creatures, such vile sinners, such unprofitable servants, as we all are. Thus we are to advance the fame, and honour the name of our great and mighty God, Jehovah. And also glorify him in our lives, by living under his fear, walking in his truth and love, and devoting our body, soul, and spirit to his service. And to cut down the devil's lie at the root, that we are too insignificant for God to notice, regard, or be pleased with, we have, blessed be God, this truth to glory of, to confront satan with, and to glorify God for, that though we are nothing but vileness, wretchedness, and unworthiness in ourselves, yet, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, he hath made us **ACCEPTED IN HIS BELOVED SON**. Eph. i. 6. O let us ever glory in, and glory of this! For the more we do so, the more we shall be excited to glorify the God of our lives, the Father of our mercies, the Lord of our comforts and our troubles, who is the God of our salvation, in spite of satan's lies against us, and the workings of unbelief within us.

Have we found a day of trouble for our sins? Have we been in a dangerous illness, and, to our own apprehension, not only sick but nigh unto death, yea, unto eternal damnation for our sins? Have we heard the sentence of the law, cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them? Gal. iii. 10. Did we then know that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men? Rom. i. 18. Did we then feel the wrath which the law works in the conscience,

and the sense of sin, sinking us into self-despair? But hearing of the love of God to sinners, the death of Christ for sinners; by the revelation of the Spirit, for the hope of sinners, did we call upon the mighty God in this day of our trouble? Did he hear and deliver us, by manifesting himself to our guilty consciences, and trembling hearts, just what he has revealed himself in his word? The **LORD**, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. **Exod. xxxiv. 7, 8.** God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing sin, **1 Cor. v. 19,** justifying the ungodly, **Rom. iv. 5,** receiving, embracing, pardoning, accepting, and comforting us, hopeless and desperate sinners, who fled to Jesus the only hope set before us in the gospel. Have we found this in the experience of our hearts, to the joy of our souls?

Say, why was all this effected upon us? What cause can we assign for all this? Reflective minds will not rest satisfied with effects, without enquiring into the cause from whence they proceed. Wise-hearted and gracious souls will also act thus. Well then, we are fully assured, from the testimony of the Spirit of truth, that there is not one gracious effect produced upon the heart of any one sinner, in time, but what proceeds from an original cause in eternity, the love of God, the choice of God, and the covenant of God. And, therefore, that covenant love and choice of us, which was big with blessings for us all, shall surely be enjoyed by us, as certainly secured to us, for the glory of the three covenanting persons in the God-head. Therefore, all the subjects of this gracious deliverance from sin, death and hell, to righteousness, peace, and heaven, will delight in, and desire to glorify, the three-one God in covenant: the mighty God, the **LORD**. This is a most blessed, sure, and certain evidence, that we both know the Lord, and know him as our deliverer.

Why, O why is it, that we set ourselves with a holy zeal to oppose the doctrine of the merit of works, justification by works, and a title to God's favour and kingdom, on account of our works; and that man's natural power, and free will, have no hand at all in procuring his title to the favor of God, an interest in the love of God, and the salvation of Christ? Why oppose all this? Because it detracts from the Glory of God, and sets up an image, and makes an idol of ourselves, in opposition to God, his rich love and free grace to sinners, mere sinners in Christ. We cannot bear this. Our love to God, and zeal for his glory, sets our hearts against it, and causeth us to oppose it. It was a zealous, loving, Christian speech of St. Jerome, "If my father should stand before me, my mother hang upon me, and my brethren press about me, to keep me from cleaving to Christ, and glorify him, his grace, truth, and salvation,

I would break through my brethren, throw down my mother, tread down my father, rather than be kept from Christ Jesus my Saviour." Christ is above all, his glory beyond all. He truly reigns over all. His love rises superior to all. Therefore, ever oppose all that stands in competition with him. Let money perish, friends fail, the world frown, and life itself perish; Christ is better than all, and his glory infinitely above all. In this view may we live to glorify God on earth; and with our latest breath may we triumphantly sing, glory be to God in the highest, the high praises of God are on our lips, for we feel his love in our hearts, and are conquerors over death.

INFERENCE.

See Christian, in and under all your troubles, you have the Lord's word to support and comfort you. Consider this and be thankful. The Lord is in his word. His grace is proclaimed by his word. His truth, power, and faithfulness, are engaged to fulfil his word. Therefore, look less at your troubles, and more at the Lord's word, and to the Lord in his word, that you may get more established in, supported by, and comforted with the word of God. Doth our Lord say, in the world ye shall have tribulation? He also adds, Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. John xvi. 33.

A COLLECT.

GLORY be to thee, O Lord, who thinkest of us miserable sinners in all our troubles. Lord, help us to obey thy blessed command, to believe thy gracious promise, and to glorify thee in all our troubles, as our loving God and heavenly Father, in Christ Jesus, to whom with the blessed Spirit of all comfort, be honour and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

The Fifth Lord's Day.

ON THE GIFT OF JESUS CHRIST.

The great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. Titus ii. 13, 14.

NEVER, no never doth satan more clearly show his cloven foot, display the malice of his forked tongue, nor manifest himself to be the father of lies, than by instigating his children to report of the holy gospel, its ministers, and professors, that they destroy morality, cry down all good works, and inculcate nothing but faith: only believe, no matter how you live and act: faith will do all for you, and secure heaven to you. This is the common cry of hell-born prejudice, the rant of ignorance, and the clamour of self-righteous, wicked people. Observation and experience furnish sufficient evidence of this truth.

The most profligate and abandoned have some kind of self-righteousness about them, which closes their ears to the good news of the gospel, and hardens their hearts against its glad tidings. And if they think they see any others commit any sins which they have not been guilty of, O how do they hug, and bless themselves, saying, well, bad as I am, I never did so and so, as such a one has. Two common prostitutes, dying under a distemper peculiar to their sins, when visited by a minister, who set before them the deplorable state of their souls, one replied, with an air of self-righteous confidence, Bad as I am, Sir, yet not so wicked as you think me to be, for I always paid such a strict regard to *Sunday*, that I never would be bad with any one on that day. And the other, from the same spirit declared, Wicked as I have been with men, yet I never picked any gentleman's pocket in my life, as others have.

O how many brethren and sisters have these poor creatures left to survive them! though not companions with them in the same sins, yet possessed of the very same spirit of self-justifying pride, and self-righteous confidence. Are we better than they by nature? No, in no wise. Have not each of us constant reason to cry, God be merciful to us a sinner! Have we any other relief for our conscience, and hope for our soul, than what the text holds forth? if we have, the Lord in mercy tear it from our hearts. For, verily it is a refuge of lies. O may God our Saviour give us clearly to see, and comfortably to experience, his great love and rich grace, while

me meditate on these precious words ! in which are contained,

1st. A gift.

2nd. The persons for whom this gift was bestowed.

3d. The ends to be answered by this gift.

4th. The effects produced in them, by receiving this gift.

Let us first consider the gift. What is it ? A fine system of morals, to regulate our conduct by, and to ennoble and exalt the dignity of our nature ? Or is it the gift of inherent grace, to qualify and dispose us for the approbation of God, and to entitle us to his favour ? Or is it an angel, or the most exalted of the angelic host, given from heaven, to make his abode with us, relate to us the glory of God, the happiness of the celestial world, and to invite us to partake of all its joy and blessedness, assuring us of God's great love to us ? More, infinitely more, than thought can conceive, or tongue express. For,—Who should dare to utter the words, were they not revealed ! It was the GREAT GOD, who gave himself. O my soul ! O my friends ! be all wonder, and silent adoration.

But, is it true ? is it possible ? It is both. For with GOD all things are possible ; and to him that believeth, all things are possible. Let all things give place to the GREAT GOD. Make room for faith. Let all give way to joy : yea, to great joy, in the GREAT GOD, the MIGHTY GOD. *Isai. ix. 6.* But, does not dread beset, and fears appal us, at the great GOD giving himself, and coming himself from heaven ? Does not the thought of sin, and the sense of guilt, terrify and affright us ? It might. It must. It would. But, O sin-subduing, guilt-conquering, sinner-comforting name ! *Even our SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST,* is added to the GREAT GOD. What wretch on earth, what fiend in hell, dare attempt to divide them ? What sensible sinner out of hell, would ever admit the direful thought of ever separating them ? No, it is the glory of his heart, the joy of his faith, the triumph of his soul, that the great GOD is our Saviour Jesus Christ : and that our Saviour Jesus Christ is the great GOD ; and that it was no less than he, who is very GOD of very GOD, equal with the Father, touching his godhead, who gave himself, For who ? for what did he give himself ? This is the

Second point. He gave himself for us ? a greater he could not give than himself. A less he would not bestow. Who are we to understand by this pronoun, *us* ? Even ALL, and every one whom he loved from eternity as GOD, and ALL who were given to him by his Father. *John xvii. 2.* That as man and mediator, he should redeem, make righteous, justify, and save in time. Say you, this is very obscure. You write in the clouds. No, blessed be God, we soar not at all above the light

of truth. Possessing that, we fear not danger. But we can descend with that also. He gave himself for us, who know him, believe on him, and have received him. Hereby we know, that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. John v. 20. This is our truth. This is our faith. Therefore we know the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us. O the joy of this faith! It is unspeakable and full of glory. O our great God and Saviour, grant us the constant experience of it in our hearts. For more of the wonders of thy love are yet to come. May each consideration increase our faith, and enliven our joy.

3d. The ends to be answered by this gift. 1st. That he might redeem us from all iniquity. View the humble man, but lose not sight of THE GREAT GOD. For sin and satan had captivated and enslaved us, and HE came to redeem us: they had robbed us of our title to heaven; and he came to restore it to us. Both these are included in the redemption of our Saviour. For these ends he gave himself for us. Redemption is the work of heaven. There it was planned. On earth it was executed. It is by price, stipulated, covenanted price, as settled by the sacred THREE. The right of redemption the Son of God took upon him. As for our Redeemer the Lord of Hosts is his name, the holy one of Israel. Isai. xlii. 4. Man lost his heavenly inheritance by sin, and his soul by iniquity. Man, the Son of God in our nature, redeems the former, and ransoms the latter, by his blood. He gave himself a ransom for all. 1 Tim. ii. 6. He gave himself for our iniquities. Our right to the heavenly inheritance is IN him, in whom we have redemption through his blood. Ephes. i. 7. Our title to it, is his righteousness. For grace reigns, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, unto eternal life. Rom. v. 21. So that, having obtained forgiveness of sins by his blood, and a right to heaven by his righteousness, our title is clear. Every hindrance is removed. The kingdom of heaven is open to sinners. Enter who will. For this he gave himself.

But we must come to the cross. Pass to it by the cross of Christ. All other ways are shut up. No other access can possibly be found for sinners. There view the Son of God, giving himself for us to redeem our souls, and restore our inheritance. There stand and gaze, wonder and adore, and learn to know, how the great God, even our Saviour, loved us. There learn the heights and depths, lengths and breadths, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. There learn to prize his love. There see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the dreadful curses of the law against our sins, the infliction of God's justice, and the

vengeance of divine wrath, poured forth on the account of our iniquities ; the infinite worth of our souls, by the price Christ bought them at, even his precious blood ; and the infinite value of the kingdom, which Christ, by his agony and death, hath opened to us. For thou, O Jesus, hast redeemed us from ALL our iniquities, the power, the guilt of them, and the curse due unto them : yea, thou hast redeemed us unto God, by giving thyself, body and soul, for us.

Glory, honour, praise and power,
Be unto the LAMB for ever :
Jesus Christ is our redeemer.

For now our once-captivated souls are perfectly redeemed, and our lost inheritance is actually restored. The jubilee-day is come. Let us rejoice in the great God, our Redeemer, for he hath not only redeemed us from all iniquity, but he gave himself, 2d. To purify unto himself a peculiar people. Redemption was not a precarious undertaking. The number of the redeemed not uncertain. But Christ knew whom he died for. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world. Acts xv. 18. He loved from eternity all whom he redeemed in time. Because he loved them, he redeemed them. After he has bought them with the price of his blood, will he leave them slaves to sin and satan ? or wait till, by their own will and power, they rescue themselves from their bondage, and become his willing servants ? No, he well knows that would never be. Therefore, he purifies them unto himself. They are peculiarly dear to the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Therefore they must be purified, that they may enjoy the love of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the comforts of the Spirit.

But how are they purified ? In one peculiar way : By the word of truth, and the power of the Spirit, through believing. Here is the agent, the Spirit : The mean, the word : And the instrument, faith. Peter is most plain and express here : " Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth," through the spirit. 1 Peter i. 22. O the amazing efficacy of this ! what is obeying the truth ? receiving, believing, and embracing the truth, as it is in Jesus, so as to come to his blood, for purification of soul, and for cleansing the conscience from the guilt and defilement of sin. All believers in Christ have done this. And therefore they are purified unto Christ. They are peculiarly dear to Christ. He is peculiarly precious to them. This internal purification of soul enters into the very essence of a Christian. It changes the vile sinner into a holy saint in Christ ; and produces external purity of life to the glory of Christ. Without this purification, what is Christia-

nity but an empty name? what is a profession of it, but as a dead body without a spirit? But all purified souls by Christ, are a peculiar people unto him. For,

1st. They are partakers of a peculiar faith: peculiar to them only. The faith of God's elect. Titus i. 1. Precious faith in the righteousness of God: even our Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. i. 1. For, they really believe him to be, what the scriptures reveal him, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Jeremi. xxiii. 6. The great God, even our Saviour, Redeemer, and Purifier. Yea, through believing, they experience him to be all this to their souls. They find they are saved in him, justified by him, cleansed from guilt by his blood, their hearts purified from the love of sin; and they feel their souls set at liberty from the bondage of the law, and the slavery of satan. Yes, at times they are so peculiarly sensible of their liberty in Christ, that their happy, highly-favoured souls, seem hardly to know, whether in the body, or out of the body, they are so elated by the power of faith, the comfort of faith, and the joy of faith. For the Lord fills them with all joy and peace, in believing. Rom. v. 13. O this is peculiar faith indeed! The Lord increase it more and more.

2d. They have peculiar hope on Christ. Faith is the parent of hope. Hope is the offspring of faith. The word of truth begets both, and supports both. Hence, hope springs eternal in believing hearts; and the outgoings of hope are to Christ, "Who is our hope." 1 Tim. i. 1. They expect to receive more and more blessings out of Christ's fulness, and desire to enjoy more and more fellowship with him, and the Father in him. Though Christ's peculiar ones can see nothing, find nothing, feel nothing in themselves, whereon to cast the anchor of hope: yea, though they are quite hopeless in themselves, yet hope accompanies faith within the veil, whither our forerunner Christ is for us entered. Heb. vi. 20. And there it drops anchor, which keeps the soul both sure and steadfast, having the firm ground of God's holy word, precious promises, immutable counsel, and sacred oath to fasten on. O blessed are ye, who are partakers of this peculiar hope! Ye are peculiarly distinguished from all the world, who are without God, without Christ, and without hope, in the world. Eph. ii. 12. But ye are in God, in Christ, and have God and Christ, and a hope full of immortality in you. This is your blessed motto, rejoice in hope. Rom. xii. 12.

3d. Christ's purified ones have a peculiar love to Christ. Love begets love. The more the love of Christ is believed, the stronger our love to Christ. We love him, because he first loved us. 1 John iv. 19. How do we know God loved us? By believing the revelation of his love to us, in the gift of Christ

for us; and in Christ giving himself to redeem and save us. Faith brings the history of God's love into the heart. The heart believes it. Hence love springs up in the heart. Every man thinks he loves God. No man can conceive himself to be such an abandoned wretch, as not to love God. But no man upon earth has any more love to God, than a devil in hell, till he believes the love of God manifested to sinners in Christ. This is the peculiar love of Christ's redeemed, purified souls. Though they are not always alike sensibly happy in love, yet they walk under the influence of love, which produces a jealous fear of offending their loving Lord, and a desire always to please him. The loving soul is never satisfied that it loves enough. It wears the conscious blush that it loves so little. It longs and prays to love Christ more perfectly, and serve him more intensely; yet knows it will die a bankrupt debtor to God's love; therefore, can never boast of his love to Christ, but will ever glory of Christ's love to him, and rate himself the chief of unloving sinners. This is peculiar love: humble love. The Lord shed it abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost. Then we shall not only love Christ, but all who are his. We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren of Christ, and our brethren in him. 1 John iii. 14.

4th. They have a peculiar life from Christ. They are dead, but alive: crucified, and yet they live. They live in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God. Gal. ii. 22. This life is out of nature, above the law, contrary to sin, beyond the world, and out of the reach of satan. They are dead to all these: though these are not dead in them; but are ever annoying them. Yet, their life is hid with Christ in God. Colos. iii. 3. Therefore, none of these can possibly destroy it, any more than they can destroy the life of God, or of Christ. It is a life of union to Christ by faith, communications from him by the Spirit, and of fellowship with him, and the Father in him. Mere natural men know no more of the nature of this spiritual life than a beast knows of the rational life of a man. It is a peculiar life: the life of God in the soul of man, by which the soul is fitted to live with God in glory. For,

5th. As they have this life from Christ, so they live a peculiar life to Christ. There is no living to Christ, till we live by faith upon Christ. Before we are quickened by him, we live only to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Self is the governing principle of all our actions, and the end to which they are all directed. To please ourselves, gratify, and glorify ourselves, and to establish our own righteousness, is all our aim and end. The maxims of the world are our rule, and by the devices of the devil, we are governed. But when Christ is our life, then he, and he alone, is our glory, and it becomes our

greatest glory on earth to live to him, to deny ourselves, and follow him : To give up all the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, for the enjoyment of him : To be dead to the world, and alive to him : To crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, for the love of him. We prize Christ in his offices, ways, truths, promises, atonement, commandments, and righteousness, and desire to be *found in him* : confessing that, after all our highest attainments, we are, what he teaches us to confess, unprofitable servants. Luke xvii. 10. We have done nothing so perfectly as we ought. Imperfection has cleaved to all. There is no merit stamped upon any. God be merciful to us, sinners; is ever to be the language of our hearts, and the cry of our lips. And we shall have another peculiar evidence that we are purified unto Christ.

6th. The scorn and contempt of the world. To be the object of God's love, the subjects of Christ's grace, the creatures of satan's envy, the men of the world's diversion, and out of conceit with themselves, is peculiar to Christ's purified people. How do you find it ? do the men of the world, who know not the love of the great God and our Saviour, despise you ? do they call you a precise person ? or do they approve, and speak well of you ? be jealous of yourself. If you have the world's esteem, it is odds against you, that you are not faithful to Christ, his truths, and his ways ; and so you sadly lose comfort from him, and a comfortable evidence, that you are purified by him. The nearer to Christ, the farther from the world. The nearer the world, the farther from Christ. Lord pity our weakness. Forgive our worldly-mindedness. Lord strengthen our faith.

Lastly, If we are Christ's purified people, we shall have a peculiar regard for his sabbaths ; and a peculiar love to his gospel. The sabbaths are a kind of jubilee days, on which the gospel trumpet is peculiarly blowed, and gospel grace peculiarly bestowed. People usually dress themselves in their best on the sabbath : so we shall aspire to appear in our election dress, the righteousness of Christ, and the graces of the Spirit on the Lord's day. We shall use all the means of grace for this end, that the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, may glory in us, be delighted with us, and be glorified by us. Come, my brethren in Christ, our days are short, our time hastens on very fast, and our end is very near—let us set out afresh, to love our Lord more, and to serve him better. Let love and praise be our cheerful, our constant employ. And, O that a feeling sense of our poverty, and our need of him, may be our continual experience : that we may be excited to call upon him for more grace. Sinners as we are : though nothing but sin dwells in our flesh, yet, if Christ has purified

our souls to himself, he has nothing but love in his heart towards us, and his hands are filled with grace, to bestow upon us. His gospel assures us of this, for it brings nothing but good news, and glad tidings to us. Do we want to know more, and enjoy more of the love of Christ in us? let us study more the gospel, or good news of Christ's love to us. For faith comes by hearing; and hearing by the word of God. Rom. x. 17. Ah! my friends, we are all deficient here. We complain for want of stronger faith, and greater love, and yet neglect the very means by which both are increased. Study the gospel more constantly, pray over it more fervently, and Christ will bless you more abundantly. But the last peculiar blessing in our text I have omitted. "Zealous of good works." This shall be the subject of our next meditation. Consider what has been said, and the Lord give us a right understanding in all things. Amen.

A COLLECT.

GLORY be unto thee, O Lord Jesu Christ, for giving thyself to be made a curse for us, and a sacrifice for our sins, that thou mightest redeem us from all iniquity, and save our souls. Grant, Lord, that the faith of this may ever dwell in us, so as to purify our hearts, give peace to our consciences, and influence our lives. O holy Spirit, we pray thee to take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us. So glorify Christ in our hearts, that we may ever rejoice in him, and glorify him. O make and keep us, obedient children of God, our heavenly Father. Give us courage for all thy glorious truths, and constancy in all thy holy ways. Thus may we live holy, die happy, and be eternally blessed in the enjoyment of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be all glory, honour, and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Sixth Lord's Day.

ON ZEAL FOR GOOD WORKS.

Zealous of Good Works. Tit. ii. 14.

THE love of Christ to us sinners is an inexhaustible subject. It is like the wide ocean, whose bottom is unfathomable : its bounding shore undiscernible. As soon might we number the drops of the sea, and empty it of its contents, as fully explore the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, of the love of Christ to us. We fail in every attempt. We come infinitely short in every meditation on it. Still, though faint, we pursue it. For we find it the most delightful subject. Dwelling upon it more largely in our last meditation than was at first intended, left us no room to attend copiously upon what every Christian is called to, namely, to be **ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS**. Let us now consider those good works which every Christian is to be zealous of ; and as we proceed, attend to the reasons for, and the obligations we are ever under, to be thus zealous. O may the Lord enlighten our minds to see what is our duty as men, and what are our privileges as Christians : and may he engage our hearts to be zealous of good works, and influence our lives to abound therein more and more, to his glory, and our soul's comfort in obedience to Christ !

1st. Let us never overlook, nor pass by, that first and last, that chief, that fundamental and great work, of all good works the most pleasing to God, believing on the name of his only begotten Son. O above all other works, be diligently attentive to this. Be zealous for this. For this is the parent of every other good work. Faith begets a numerous offspring. Without this faith, all works have only the specious show and gaudy appearance of good ; but in reality, are not stamped in the court of heaven, with the standard mark of *good* : therefore, are only base and counterfeit. For, whatsoever is not of faith is *SIN*. Rom. xiv. 23. All works without exception. Why should we be zealous for this ? When the Jews asked our Saviour, what shall we do, that we may work the works of God ? as though this was the chief, the only, the principal work of God, he answers, This is *the work* of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent. John vi. 29. While this work brings the greatest honour and glory to God, it ever produces peace, comfort, and joy of soul from God. Therefore, we are under the strongest obligations to be zealous of it. It is called *believing*,

because it is to be our constant and continued work, through life. These things are written [concerning Jesus and his salvation] that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *believing*, ye might have life through his name. John xx. 31. And he also says, These things have I written unto you, who believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe (go on and continue believing) on the name of the Son of God. 1 John v. 13. Remember, ever remember, that word of our Lord, and let it excite a zeal in us, for this good work, According to your faith be it unto you. Matt. ix. 29. So we shall ever find it in experience. The more our hearts go out in-faith to Jesus, the more blessings they will bring in from him, and the more we shall glorify him. While this shews us the reason for, and the obligations we are under, O may it excite in us a zeal for this good work !

2d. To follow Christ is a good work, which we ought to be zealous for. This work is delightful to the Spirit, but grievous to the flesh. For, these two things enter into the essence of it, self-denial and taking up the cross. Yet, there are blessed reasons for it, and we are under the strongest obligations to be zealous of it. For our dear Master says unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Matt. xvi. 24. There is an absolute necessity for this work. For there is no enjoying Christ's love, but in Christ's way. We must deny every thing that our corrupt nature fancies will make us righteous and happy, for Christ. We must put all upon his cross, and crucify it : and put this cross upon our shoulders, and carry it, confessing every step, I have no righteousness, no happiness in myself. I seek both in Christ. I expect both from Christ : and therefore I follow Christ to enjoy both in him. This is living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit. And in this way we shall enjoy spiritual comforts. Says holy, ambitious Paul, I follow after to apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Phil. iii. 12. O that the same mind may be in us also, that we may be zealous to follow Christ closely ! Let us remember what loss Peter suffered, what distress he gained by following Christ afar off. And for Christ's glory and our soul's comfort, may the Lord make us zealous to live near him, and walk closely with him.

3d. It is a good work to confess Christ, which we ought to be zealous of. It is a very easy work to confess Christ on our knees, and in our closets, to be our Saviour, and that all our hope is in him, and all our expectations from him; that we are vile sinners in ourselves, and must be wholly indebted to his blood for pardon, to his righteousness for justification, and

to his finished work upon the cross, for our salvation. But this is not all. For we are publicly to own Christ, and acknowledge that we are his disciples, that we believe his truths, delight in his commandments, and trust his promises, in spite of all opposition and danger from his enemies. For, says our Lord, Whosoever shall confess me before men, [to be the Son of God, the only Saviour of sinners] him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. For whosoever shall deny me [in my person, character, offices, and relations to sinners], him will I also deny before my Father, who is in heaven. Matt. x. 32, 33. See then the weighty reasons, and solemn obligations we are under, to be zealous of this good work. O that fear or shame should ever damp our zeal, and discourage our hearts in this work! No wonder that we are so much ashamed before the Lord, and have so many fears concerning our souls, our state, and our interest in the Lord's love and salvation, if we are not zealous for this good work. You see how conditional, as to our comfort, our confession of Christ, and of his confessing us: of our denying Christ, and of his denying us, runs. If we boldly confess him, he will richly own, and greatly bless us with the sense of his Father's love. If we deny him, heavenly comfort, joy, and peace, shall be denied unto us. Peter found the truth of this, therefore, he went out and wept bitterly. That we may rejoice heartily, and ever more rejoice, the Lord grant that we may see the reason of this good work, and be ever zealous to honour Christ by confessing him before men, from our hearts, with our lips, and by our lives, so as to recommend him, his cause and interest in the world, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

4th. Forgiving ones enemies, is a good work which we are to be zealous of. Is there a Christian upon earth but what has enemies! so long as satan, the grand enemy of Christ and his people, lives, he will stir up enemies against them. Why does the friend of sinners suffer this? for the exercise of our graces, the profit of our souls, and the glory of his name. Do you think to escape from earth to heaven, without finding enemies by the way? No, no. You shall find many great enemies, and many bitter trials from them too. How are we to overcome the one, and to get rid of the other? there is but one way; to love our enemies, pray for them, and forgive them. While love prevails, prayers ascend, and the heart forgives, there is a victory in the soul over our enemies, and a deliverance from the trials they exercise us with. For then we put our cause into our Lord's hand, and cast our burden upon him: so we get a comfortable portion of that precious fragrant herb, **HEARTS EASE**. We have the strongest reason for this, and are under the most powerful obligation to be zealous for this

good work. Thus the holy spirit commands, Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Eph. iv. 32. Hear your Lord, If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matt. vi. 14, 15. Well, but say you, mine enemy hath injured me, he has done me wrong again and again. I have passed by and forgiven him in my heart, and from my heart, repeatedly. How often must I forgive him? till seven times? Peter asked this very question. Hear our Lord's answer. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, [you may think that a great many times, and enough, but I do not,] but until seventy times seven, even four hundred and ninety times. God multiplies pardon to us, times without number, so ought we to others. But does God ever forgive us, without repenting of our sins? Yes, in his heart he does, for Christ's sake. He has nothing but love in his heart to us, as we are in his beloved Son. But, he will not manifest his forgiving love to our souls, till we turn to him, confess our fault, repent of it, and pray him to forgive us. Just so he requires us to act. If thy brother trespass against thee, seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying I repent; thou shalt forgive him. Thou shalt pronounce from thy heart that thou dost. But suppose he do not turn again to thee, and say I repent, what then? Still nothing but love is to live in thy heart to him. Thou art to forgive him in thy heart. True, thou mayest withhold the declaration of thy forgiveness from him, till he turn to thee, and say, I repent. But take heed to yourselves, saith the Lord, lest you indulge any root of bitterness against him in your heart. For this will certainly spring up, and trouble your own soul, and destroy your peace and comfort in the Lord. Is not this, then, plainly a good work? ought we not ever to be zealous of it? True, it is above nature, out of nature, and contrary to flesh and blood. So the disciples saw it. What did they do? assail heaven by prayer. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. Luke xvii. 5. Faith engages the Lord's power to increase of faith, increase of power, and increase of victory, over flesh and blood, and to what is impossible to flesh and blood. See also, how these disciples confess the divinity of their Lord. They pray him to increase their faith, owning him to be God, the giver of faith, the author and finisher of faith. O this faith is and from Christ makes us zealous of good works. The more faith, the more zeal for Christ's honour, in obeying his commands. Go thou and do likewise.

5th. Keeping holy the sabbath, is a good work, which

we ought to be zealous for. It is good for ourselves, for our souls and bodies, good for others, and good for the promoting the honor and glory of God in the world, by spreading his fame, joining in his public worship, hearing his glorious gospel, celebrating his love at his table, and making his name, his salvation, and the high praises of God our Saviour glorious in the earth. O what precious blessings, what rich comforts, what heavenly joys, does the Lord bestow upon us, while we are sanctifying his sabbaths, keeping holy his day, and waiting upon him as he has commanded! His holy commands are the strongest reasons, and his promises lay us under the greatest obligations, to be zealous of this good work. O how many judgments hath the Lord executed upon the breakers of his sabbaths. In the very midst of their pleasures, in the very height of their joy and festivity, how many has he cut off, in their sins upon earth, to suffer his wrath in hell. Instances of this are common. The anger of the Lord smokes against the profaners of his sabbaths. But his salvation is near them, his righteousness revealed to them, and his blessing is upon all them who keep his sabbaths from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Blessed, says he, is the man who doeth this, and the son of man who layeth hold on this: even his salvation and his righteousness. Isai. lvi. 2. He says, I will make them joyful in my house of prayer, &c. ver. 7. The Lord make us zealous of this good work, that he may have the glory, while we enjoy the blessing and comfort of it.

6th. Visiting the sick and comforting the afflicted, is a good work to be zealous of. Our own souls shall be blessed in this work, and the souls of others by this work. Blessed be God, I know it by happy experience. The glory is the Lord's. For he says, He who watereth [others] shall be watered also himself. Prov. xi. 25. To do good, and to communicate, not only of temporal things, but of spiritual truths, spiritual consolations to, and spiritual prayers for the bodily sick and afflicted soul, are sacrifices with which God is well pleased. Heb. xiii. 16. Yea, says our Lord, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto ME. Matt. xxv. 40. O is not this reason enough, is not here obligation strong enough to excite a zeal for this work? For God is well pleased with it: Christ takes it as done unto himself; and promises, he will water those who water others. O for a heart filled with greater love to our brethren, and inspired with more zeal for their good, and our Lord's glory.

7th. It is a good work, which we ought to be zealous of, to minister to the temporal wants and necessities of others. The voice of reason, the feelings of humanity, and the pleas of the

distressed, loudly call us to this duty as men. But the voice of inspiration makes it our peculiar privilege, and our bounden duty as Christians. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. Ephes. ii. 10. Our Saviour went about doing good. Acts x. 38. And he hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps. 1 Pet. ii. 21. Though we cannot, like him, raise the dead, give sight to the blind, cure the deaf and dumb, restore soundness to the lame, health to the sick, &c. yet a writer very ingeniously asks, What should we think of that person who, were it possible, should lock up in his chest, eyes, and legs, and arms, while many poor distressed objects are dragging on through life destitute of them? Just so inhumanely does he act, who locks up riches in his chest, and refuses to administer that which would be as eyes, legs, and arms, to the distressed. Says Job, I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame: I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out. The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. xxix. 13, &c. O this is delightful work to a gracious soul and generous heart. He experiences the comfort and joy of what Christ said, it is more blessed to give, than to receive. Acts xx. 35. Consider, you live by the free grace, live upon the sovereign mercy, are comforted by the precious promises, and made happy in the love of a covenant God; nothing of all which you merit or deserve the least title or claim to. Think of this, and say, is not this a most powerful reason, and are not you under the strongest obligation to this, and every work of faith, and labour of love, in doing good to others, by distributing to their need, and supplying their necessities? The Lord gives you that you may give to others. Let faith speak. Let the voice of love be heard. Let the language of hope be attended to, and the precepts, promises, exhortations, commands, and examples of the Son of God our Saviour regarded, and then zeal for this good work will not be wanting: But, we shall be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labour shall not be vain in the Lord. For the Lord who hath redeemed us from all iniquity, that he might purify us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works, will own and confess us, will reward all our works out of his free grace, and according to his precious promise, and we shall joyfully hear that blessed sentence pronounced from his loving lips, Come ye blessed of my Father, [blessed from eternity, by the choice of his love, and blessed through time, by his heavenly grace, which disposed you to be zealous of good works, and thereby you honoured me, and glorified your Father which is in heaven,

before men,] enter ye into the joy of your Lord. Many more works might be mentioned. But the word of God fully supplies what are omitted. Therefore,

Lastly, One work remains, and through the exercise of this upon the mind, ministers of Christ are often prevented from so greatly extolling, and the people of Christ from speaking so highly of good works, as they otherwise would; and hence, the men of the world (who do the least good works, but talk most about them) arraign and condemn them, for being enemies to good works. What is this good work? A work not at all thought of, and never once practised by the men of the world; and too little attended to by Christ's people: even this work, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. 1 Pet. v. 6. Humble yourselves in the sight of God. James iv. 10. This is a work which we ought incessantly to be engaged in, in season and out of season. There is no place, state, situation, or circumstance, we can possibly be in, but this work is necessary for us, and we ought to be zealous of it. Good Lord what are we? What do we? In the view of all that we are, under the sense of all that we have done, thou hast taught us ever to confess and say, After all we have done, we are unprofitable servants. Luke xvii. 10. God be merciful to me a sinner, is a cry suited for the lips of the greatest saint on earth; and will also be the language of every sanctified, humble heart to the Lord. We cannot sink so low in humility, as we have cause in reality. Then let all our works be like John the Baptist, the speaking son of a dumb parent. Let them speak for us: let us not speak of them. I often think of what is said of king Hezekiah, he humbled himself for the pride of his heart. 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. Who but the heavenly enlightened soul sees, knows, and feels, the cursed leaven of pride, which works in the human heart, and in how many ways it turns to self-righteous hopes and confidence; Do we see enough of this to humble us, and make us ashamed of ourselves, and cause us to abhor ourselves before the Lord? O how much more loathsome and abominable must this appear in the eyes of that God, who with infinite perception, searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men? O what cause to humble ourselves under his all-seeing eye, and almighty hand. Let us be ever zealous of this good work. Ever practising it upon our hearts. Ever exercising our minds upon our own nothingness, vileness, deformity, baseness, and yet—what is worst of all, infected with hell-born pride of heart, and diabolic haughtiness of spirit. To effect this good work, ever consider the love of that God who chose you from eternity, the sovereignty of that mercy that snatched you as a brand out of the fire of hell. Ever dwell on the fulness of that grace, that brought the Son of God from the highest hea-

vens, to redeem you from the deserts of sin, and to save you from going down into the lowest pit of infernal destruction. Ever remember the efficacy of that power of the holy Spirit, which enlightened your *understanding* to see what a wretch you are, how cursed and condemned for sin, by the pure, holy, and righteous law of God; persuaded your *heart* to believe the truth as it is in Jesus, effectually wrought upon your *will*, and made you willing, in the day of his power, to go to Christ, to be pardoned by his blood, clothed with his righteousness, and to be saved wholly by him; and turned your *affections* from the world, yourself, and sin, to find all your rest, comfort, and happiness, in Christ alone. And do your affections still humbly cleave to the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners? Then hear and rejoice. For, Thus saith the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isai. lvii. 15. Thus saith our Lord, He who humbly himself shall be exalted. Luke xviii. 14. The Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirit. Amen.

A COLLECT.

GLORY be unto thee, O Son of God, that thou hast not only given thyself for us, but hast also obtained the holy Spirit to be in us, to purify us unto thyself on earth, as well as to glorify us with thee in heaven. Grant us, dear Lord, to experience the love and power of this more and more in our hearts, and upon our lives. O may we live thy devoted servants, and die in the comfort of faith, and the joy of hope in thee. Teach us to live upon thy redeeming love, and to be zealous of good works. Lord, deliver us from all pride and self-righteousness of heart, and enable us to walk humbly before thee, and evermore to rejoice in thee, to the glory of thee, to whom with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be endless praises. Amen.

The Seventh Lord's Day.

ON THE ENJOYMENT OF THE SPIRIT.

But Jesus rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of. Luke ix. 55. Ye know the Spirit of Truth, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. John xiv. 17.

WHAT ! speak these words to the very same persons ? Is not this a very strange contrast ? Yes. And so is every regenerate man. Through the flesh cleaving to us, too apt are we to forget our heavenly birth, and to act in the spirit and temper of those who are destitute of the Spirit of Christ. But mind, though Christ rebuked their conduct, he does not call in question their state, and condemn them, as not having the Spirit ; but as not considering the loving, meek, tender spirit and temper of his gospel, under the benign influence of which they were ever to act. An excellent lesson to us, to reprove in love what we see amiss, but never to judge of a person's state. May we not from hence safely draw this conclusion, that even Christ's own disciples, who know the Spirit of truth, and with whom he dwelleth, may yet be prone, in many instances, to act contrary to that spirit ; but yet not so as to affect their standing in Christ, and being followers of him ?

In this mixed, imperfect state of flesh and spirit, wherein we know but in part, may we not err in many things, while we may still enjoy the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the holy Ghost ? Pray do not mistake me here, as though I were pleading for sin, palliating its guilt, or finding an excuse for its commission. The Lord forbid, that ever I should be an advocate in such a cursed cause. Glory be to God, I have not so learned Christ. But yet I would plead, even with my latest breath, for the free and full love of Christ to sinners, the efficacy of his precious blood, which he shed for sinners, and that there is forgiveness of all manner of sin in it, and cleansing from all sin by it. And this, not to encourage any to sin, but to excite poor sinners to go to Christ, for pardon of sin, and cleansing from all sin, that he may be glorified in love, and they comforted in holiness. This the Spirit of truth, which dwelt with the apostles, taught them, while Christ was with them on earth ; and after Christ was glorified in his human nature, was *in* them as the comforter, to assure them of their own personal interest in his love and salvation, so that then each could say with Paul, Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. Gal. ii. 20.

Now is not this the free and blessed charter of the covenant of grace, and the joyful privilege of all the children of God by faith in Christ! Undoubtedly. But do they all enjoy it? Are none the children of God but what do? We dare not say this: for it is not agreeable to the oracles of God, nor found true in the experience of his believing children. And to insist upon it must be productive of this evil: either, on one hand, of distressing the real children of God, and making their hearts sad, whom the Lord would not have to be sad, by causing them to conclude that they are in a state of unbelief, wrath, and condemnation, because they have not yet received this comfort and assurance of the Holy Ghost. And, on the other hand, by causing those of strong passions, bold imaginations, and vain confident minds, boldly to presume that they do enjoy this comfort and assurance, when they cannot shew, by the word of God, any warrant to support it. For this is the true test of all experience. What is agreeable to that, receive. What that doth not support, reject. So we shall go on safely, and comfortably. In order, therefore, to prevent deception, for our confirmation in the truth, and comfort by the truth, let us consult the sacred oracles, and hear what is therein testified of the Spirit of Truth. Let us consider what our Lord means by the Spirit of Truth dwelling *WITH* and *IN* his disciples. O that while we are thus engaged, may the holy Spirit be with us, to lead and guide us into all truth, and be in us as a comforter, by witnessing to the truth in our hearts!

1st. What is meant by the Spirit of truth dwelling with us? But it may be asked, do these words belong, or can they with any propriety be applied to Christ's disciples now? Undoubtedly. Are there any disciples of Christ, any believers in him now upon the earth? Certainly. Do such belong to Christ? This cannot be denied. For it is said, If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Rom. viii. 9. This negative includes this affirmative, that every believer in Christ, is a member of Christ, and does belong to Christ; and, therefore, that every believer hath the Spirit of Christ dwelling with him. This is so clear and plain, that no other proof need be brought, though a thousand others, glory be to God, might be adduced from his blessed word, that the indwelling of the Spirit is the common privilege of every believer. Christ himself fully determines this. John vii. 39.

2d. Our Lord calls him *the Spirit of Truth*, because he bears witness in the scriptures to the truth, as it is in Jesus; and to him who emphatically says, *I AM THE TRUTH*. John xiv. 6. All scripture is given by inspiration of God the Spirit. 2 Tim. iii. 16. And, says our Lord, The scriptures testify of *ME*.

John v. 39, That Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners. This is the capital, the leading, the fundamental truth of the scriptures. It is the central point of truth, in which the glory of God, and the comfort of his people meet. From this cardinal truth, that Christ is the Son of God and Saviour of men, witnessed by the Spirit of Truth in the holy scriptures, many precious branches of truth shoot out, which bring glory to God in the highest, and bear the most salutary fruits of peace on earth, and good-will towards men: such as, that we sinners are loved of God, with the very same everlasting unchanging love, with which he loved Christ, his only Son, in whom he loved us, John xvii. 23; that we are chosen in Christ. Ephes. i. 5. Redeemed by Christ. Gal. iii. 13. Justified in Christ. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Adopted in Christ. Ephes. i. 5. Accepted in Christ. Ephes. i. 6. Sanctified in Christ. 1 Cor. vi. 11. New creatures in Christ. 2 Cor. v. 17. Have access to God in Christ. Rom. v. 2. Are joint heirs with Christ. Rom. viii. 17. And shall be glorified together with Christ. Rom. viii. 17. All this, the Spirit bears witness to, in the word of truth; and, therefore, our Lord calls him, The Spirit of Truth. These are the truths of the Spirit: and every one who is of the truth, hears, knows, believes, and receives these truths, in the spirit of them, and in love to them. Therefore, pause and examine, are they the spirit and life of your soul? Does your peace, comfort, and joy spring from them? Does your heart delight in them? And do you bless the Spirit for them? For,

3d. Our Lord says, the spirit of truth dwelleth *with you*. How may any one know that the Spirit of Truth dwelleth with him? This was answered the last moment. Even by his believing, receiving, and loving those truths, which were particularised, and which the Spirit of Truth bears witness to, in the word of truth. If any man reject these, he has no reason to conclude that the Spirit of Truth dwelleth with him. Nay, if he opposes any of these truths, does he not prove himself to be a man of a corrupt mind, perverse disputings, and destitute of the truth? 1 Tim. vi. 5. For, the Spirit of Truth dwelleth with us, as an enlightening Spirit, to give us to know, understand, and believe the truths of the scriptures; and through the knowledge and belief of the scriptures, he leads and guides us into all truth, concerning ourselves, and salvation by the Son of God: that he is the Saviour of the lost, the righteousness of the unrighteous, the justifier of the ungodly, and the sanctifier of the unholy. For Christ is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. 1 Cor. i. 30. This is truth. And if the Spirit of Truth dwell with us, he will lead and guide us into the knowledge and belief of this truth, that it may dwell in our hearts, and abide with our spirits, to our

peace, comfort, and holiness. For the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. ii. 11.

4th. The Spirit of Truth dwelleth with us, to reconcile us as enemies. Therefore he teaches us to understand, and persuades us to believe, the love of God manifested to sinners in Christ Jesus. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John xv. 13. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were sinners [against God, and enemies to him] Christ died for us. Rom. v. 8. And God was in Christ, reconciling the world [of ungodly sinners, proud rebels, and stout-hearted enemies] to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. 2 Cor. v. 19. This is the ministry of the gospel, the ministry of the Spirit of truth. And when he makes this clear and plain to any sinner's conscience, how does it slay the enmity of his mind against God, work repentance in him towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? With what self-abhorrence doth he throw down his arms, and cease his hostilities against God? With what eagerness doth he flee unto, and with what earnestness call upon a reconciled God in Christ, God be merciful to me a sinner, an enemy to thee, a rebel against thee! Now, as he becomes reconciled to God, and at peace with God, he cheerfully submits his proud reasonings, and carnal objections, to the truths of God; that his vain imaginations, of himself, of the power of his own free-will, the pride of his own self-righteousness, and the good opinion that he had of himself, and every high thought of himself which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, may be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. x. 5. Thus he will expostulate with himself now, wretch that I am, that ever I should be an enemy to the God of truth and grace! Fool that I was, for folly in the extreme it is proudly and arrogantly to reply against the God of truth, call in question his glorious truths, and deny their comforting, sanctifying influence. In the truth of God's everlasting love I now see support. By his sovereign grace, sinners are called to him, and are safe and secure in him, from every foe against them. In Christ's righteousness being imputed to sinners, they have a title to glory, are righteous before God, and justified by God. In Christ's blood they have redemption, even the forgiveness of their sins. By God's power, they are kept through faith, unto eternal salvation. These, these glorious truths, the Spirit speaks plainly of in the word of grace, but, blind as I was, I saw them not. Ignorant as I was, I understood them not. Wretch that I was, I believed them not. But foolishly and madly, in ignorance and unbelief, I set myself to oppose these gracious truths, and branded them with dreadfully wicked, and horribly licentious consequences. But now

to the Spirit of Truth, O what a mighty debtor ! for he dwelleth with me, and hath graciously reconciled me to them ; and now I see them, as the greatest and most powerful incentives to love and holiness. Have you found it so in the experience of your hearts ? Then,

5th. The Spirit of Truth dwelleth with you, as a spirit of regeneration. He hath of his own will begat us, with the word of truth. James i. 18. Yea, according to his abundant mercy, he hath begotten us a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Pet. i. 3. It is impossible to receive and believe that divine, well-attested, undeniable truth, that the very same Jesus, who was a perfect MAN, like unto us in all things, sin excepted, crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, expired on the cross in blood and agony for sinners, and rose again for their justification, but we must conceive a lively hope towards God, however wretched our condition, desperate our state, and deplorable our circumstances may be. Though this fact is clear and plain in the word of truth, and is attested by the Spirit of Truth, yet, till he presents it to our minds in its divine glory, persuasive eloquence, and happy consequences, we treat it only as an idle tale, insipid and uninteresting to us. But when we view it in the light of truth, under the influence of the Spirit, we see such amazing charms, such wonderful glories in it, as at once begets our spirits to a justifying God, attracts our affections to a risen Saviour, and causes a lively hope to spring up in our hopeless souls towards both. And this lively hope makes us ashamed and confounded, that we should so long deceive our souls with a hope, vain and flattering, dead and unscriptural. Have we found it thus ? If so,

6th. The Spirit of Truth dwelleth with us as a converting Spirit. No sooner does the day star of hope in Jesus arise in the heart, but the soul turns unto Jesus, the sun of righteousness. We turn from ourselves, from our self-righteousness, as well as our sins : From what engaged our whole affections, the love of the world ; from what was dear to us as our life, our sinful companions, and from the unfruitful works of darkness unto Christ. To know him, be found in him, and to enjoy fellowship with him, is now the one thing needful : the one desire of our soul. Thus our state is safe, and our salvation sure. But do all with whom the Spirit of Truth thus dwelleth, as an enlightening, reconciling, regenerating, converting, Spirit, know assuredly that their sins are forgiven, that Christ is theirs, that they are interested in his salvation, are the children of God, and shall certainly enjoy eternal life ? No, the contrary is manifest. As well suppose that a child, not yet arrived to reason, knows who created him. So, many of those precious souls are weak in knowledge, feeble in faith, and low in comfort : and so far

from enjoying the full assurance of salvation, they stagger in their minds, are full of doubts and fears, and are ready to question, whether they really are partakers of the grace of God or not. What shall we say of such? St. John tells us, They are little children, dear children of God, and their sins are forgiven them, for Christ's sake. 1 John ii. 12. And of such our Lord says,

Secondly, The Spirit of Truth shall be *in you*, as the Spirit of adoption, whereby they shall know that they are the children of God. Mind that precious word. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son, [the very same Spirit that Christ our mediator possessed, and which descended on him like a dove] into your hearts, crying, abba, Father. Gal. iv. 6. *My loving God, my reconciled Father, in Christ.* In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son to redeem us, that we might receive the adoption of sons. The blessing of it by faith. So that we are sons of God by choice, and faith, before we know it. And in the fulness of time, God sends forth his Spirit into our hearts, to assure and give us the comfort of it. He fills us with all joy and peace in believing, banishes our doubts, and expels our fears.

2d. Thus the Spirit of truth, 1st, Reconciles us as enemies; and then, 2ndly, Comforts us as friends. Having effected the former, he fails not to accomplish the latter. Our minds being reconciled to God, and the way of salvation, by the Son of his love, the grace of his word, and by the teaching of his Spirit; here a large field opens to us, which we may call the spacious lawn of love to God, and obedience to his commands. Having received and obeyed his first and great commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John iii. 23. Now we are reconciled to God, and commence friends of Christ. The ever-loving friend of sinners says, I call you not servants but friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. John xv. 14, 15. Therefore, the Spirit of Truth comforts us, as friends of Christ. In our walk of faith, and obedience of love, while we are giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure, the Spirit is a comforter to us; by bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, that our sins are actually pardoned in his blood, our persons perfectly justified in his righteousness, our souls really sanctified by his Spirit, and that we are saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation. O the ravishing joy, and unspeakable blessedness, of thus having the Spirit of truth *in us*! Verily, we are at the gates of heaven, and the suburbs of glory. O press forward. Strive after it. Give all diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end. Heb. vii. 12.

3d. So that you see the Spirit of Truth comfort's Christ's friends, not upon the footing of any kind of merit or desert in them, or for the sake of any terms and conditions fulfilled by them. No. This is the spirit of the world. Every natural man imagines, God will love, comfort, and save him, for something done by him, or found in him. But he comforts our hearts by assuring us, that all things, pardon of sin, justification unto life, his children by adoption, sanctification unto holiness of life, the Spirit to be our comforter, and the kingdom of heaven to be our eternal residence, all are freely given, unmeritedly bestowed upon us for Christ's sake: and that all things are ours and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. 1 Cor. iii. 23. Therefore says our Lord, But when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of *me*, John xv. 26; and he shall glorify *me*. xvi. 14. Therefore, if Christ, what he is in his person, and what he has done to justify and save sinners, be the sum and substance of all your comforts: if Christ is glorified in your eyes, and to your heart, in your assurance of salvation; doubt not but these comforts, and this assurance is given you, by the Spirit of Truth which is *in you*. O rejoice, then. Love Christ, the ground of all your comforts. Praise the holy Spirit, who is the applier of them. Walk with Christ. Be humble before him, and obedient to him, as a dear friend of his.

Lastly. According to our Lord's promise, the Spirit of Truth shall be *in you*. Did the holy Ghost, **THE COMFORTER**, descend in all his fulness upon Christ's apostles and friends, on the day of pentecost? Acts ii. 4. Then let us, with whom the Spirit of truth dwelleth, do as Christ directed them, tarry at Jerusalem, waiting for the promise of the Father, to make a joyful pentecost-day in our souls. Let us be found waiting in the service of the temple, keeping the Lord's sabbaths as a memorial of him, holding fast his blessed truths, pleading his precious promises, living and walking in the love and fear of him, dreading to draw back from him, ever remembering, that God gives the holy Ghost [in his witnessing, comforting, and assuring grace] to them who *obey him*. Acts v. 32. Have you had one sweet, joyful, pentecost-day, wherein you did rejoice in the comforts of the holy Ghost, and could say with the church, *my beloved is mine*, and I am his? And with Paul, Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. Gal. ii. 20. How long since? Perhaps fourteen years, or less. What then? Are you fallen asleep now, in careless sloth, and supine indolence, thinking all is safe and secure? This is an awful sign. If your comforts were from the Holy Ghost, they were never given for this end, Arise thou sleeper and call upon thy God. Awake thou that

sleepest, and arise from the dead, [thy dead, sleepy frames. Shake thyself from the dust of the earth,] and Christ shall give thee light. Ephes. v. 14. The light of life, the light of liveliness, peace, comfort, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Then shalt thou glory of, and glory in thy Lord afresh, who is ever worthy of all our love and praise, now and for ever.

INFERENCE.

Is it so, that all our knowledge of Christ, and all our comfort in Christ, is enjoyed from the Spirit of Truth, in believing the word of truth? then how highly ought we to prize the scriptures, so as to search them daily, study them diligently, look and pray to the Spirit constantly, that we may see Christ in them more clearly, and enjoy him more comfortably in our hearts? and how ought we to love, adore, and praise the holy Spirit, for enlightening our minds to understand, and persuading our hearts to believe the scriptures, so as to trust in the precious promises which are in Christ, and possess the hope of eternal life by him? How zealous should we be to honour the word, and teaching of the Spirit by the word, in opposition to all the unscriptural flights and fancies of enthusiastic folly? therefore, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits by the word. 1 John iv. 1. These slight God's word, and teach contrary to it.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, thou enlightening, comforting Spirit, teach us more of thy divine truths, and lead us in all thy holy-ways. Glorify Christ in our hearts, and keep our hearts close to Christ. O enable us in the faith of him, and in the truth of thy witness to him, to cry from our hearts, Abba, Father, that we may possess the love of God's children, and be obedient to his heavenly will, to the glory of Father, Son, and Spirit, now and ever. Amen.

The Eighth Lord's Day.

ON CHRISTIANS FALLING FROM THEIR STEDFASTNESS.

Ye therefore beloved, seeing ye know these Things before, beware, lest ye also being led away by the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Stedfastness. 2 Pet. iii. 17.

It is a just remark, that there never were more persons who fail in their circumstances, and become bankrupts, than at present. The reason in general is, they live above their income. This bad conduct prevails for want of due consideration, not making a proper calculation of things, and through pride of heart, and dissipation of mind. No wonder that this issues in insolvency. In the Christian life it is the reverse. Those who fail here, live too low: far beneath their income. They fail, for not living up to their high calling and exalted privileges, and acting like themselves, sons of the most high God, princes of royal blood, and heirs of a heavenly kingdom. True, it is because their minds are dissipated, their affections grovel, and are entangled with objects too low for their gratifications, too unworthy to engage their attention, and too mean for their eager pursuits. But, while this is the case, though they may get forward in earthly enjoyments, yet they awfully run backward in spiritual prosperity; and are reduced, in their soul concerns, to a state of poverty and bankruptcy. Well knowing the dreadful evil, and awful danger of such conduct, Peter addresses this excellent admonition to professors.

O may that blessed Spirit, who inspired this apostle to write these words, give us to see how suitable they are to our present state, and enable us so to consider their importance, as to be warned of our danger of falling away; and through his blessing upon our meditation, may they confirm and establish our souls in the truth, that we may stedfastly stand against every enemy, even till we put off our armour, and are clothed with our shroud. Let us consider,

- 1st. What is implied by our own stedfastness.
- 2d. The danger and evil of falling from it.
- 3d. How any do fall away.
- 4th. The reasons for, and the constant need we have of, that caution, **BEWARE.**

1st. What is implied by our own stedfastness? Now is it suggested to you, that it is very legal to talk of our own stedfastness; and contrary to the doctrine of salvation by grace,

and perseverance to glory, to talk of falling away? Mind; *ter* is not treating of final apostacy from the faith, but of falling away from the stedfastness of faith. God's faithfulness is declared in his word, and confirmed by his oath, to all the heirs of promise, who have fled to Christ, to lay hold of him, who is the hope set before them in the gospel, that they might have strong consolation. Heb. vi. 18. God's word and oath to the immutability of his counsel, bind him to be stedfast in faithfulness to them: and his mighty power is engaged to keep them through faith unto salvation. For, they are garrisoned in God, and an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, is reserved in heaven for them. 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

Notwithstanding all this, there is a stedfastness which we may attain to, and fall away from. And this stedfastness is justly called *our own*. For, if Christ, who is the author of our faith, gives us to believe on him, it is with our hearts that we do believe, and therefore it is called our faith. If he inclines us to pray to him, and cleave to him, the work is ours; therefore is called our prayers, and our cleaving. Though it is God who works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure, yet it is we who both will and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. So that, if we have arrived to any degree of stedfastness in faith, in prayer, cleaving to Christ, and abiding in him, and in doing those things which please him, it is by his own power which quickened us, his grace that watered us, and his flesh and blood that nourished us; therefore, all the glory is wholly due to him, by whom we are what we are. O may we give it to him now and ever! yet this is very properly called our own faithfulness, for we are the happy subjects of it.

Even a babe in Christ, who is but just come to the knowledge of, and standing in Christ by faith, has attained to a degree of his own stedfastness, though he be not so strong in faith, nor so established in Christ, as young men and fathers are. Therefore, this admonition against falling away from our own stedfastness, is to all and every one who professes to know Christ, be in Christ, and to have received Christ by faith. Hence St. Paul tells each and every one of the members of the church at Colosse, what joy he had in beholding the stedfastness of their faith. Col. ii. 5. Great joy it must be to ministers and Christians, to see all who profess Christ, whether babes, young men, or fathers, to be stedfast to Christ: in the knowledge of him, faith in him, love to him, and boldness for his truths and his glory in the world.

But there is nothing the world more hates, the devil more envies, than a stedfast Christian. For he is an honour to Christ, and Christ will honour him. If he is a young Christian, he will

put old ones to the blush, and, by his stedfastness, excite them to greater diligence. If he is an old Christian, he is a blessed example to the lambs of the flock, and will greatly encourage them to hold fast the beginning of their confidence stedfast to the end. O, then, how highly ought we to prize stedfastness? and the more we do this, so much the more shall we dread what we now come to consider.

Secondly. The danger and evil of falling from our own stedfastness. Though we are regenerated by the Spirit, have put on Christ, are new creatures in him, and stand by the faith of him; yet, let us not be high minded, but fear, continually fear; though not of falling into hell; for our Saviour says, we shall never perish, I will give unto them eternal life. John x. 28. Yet fear falling away from the peace of faith, the joy of hope, the comfort of love, delight in the ways of God's holy commandments, his precious truths, and sweet fellowship with him in Christ. Therefore, let us never forget that we are still the subjects of a body of sin, which dwelleth in us, that there is not one sin that is committed in the world, but the seeds of it are in our fallen nature, and we are liable to fall into it, and to fall away by it. Indeed, there is this one evil which those who know not Christ are in no danger of committing, even of falling away from their stedfastness in the faith of Christ; but to this great evil we are continually exposed, and are in constant danger of falling into, through a tempting devil, an ensnaring world, and a deceitful and wicked heart. And when the soul is thus fallen away from its own stedfastness, O how dreadful the fall! what innumerable evils attend it!

If the once zealous gospel minister falls from his own stedfastness, by catching the spirit and temper of the world, engaging in the pleasures of it, and choosing the company of the men of it; how soon will this manifest itself, by his coldness and indifference to his most honourable work, his deadness and formality in performing it, and (if he does not totally neglect it) his carelessness and unconcern about the success of it, the bringing glory to Jesus, by converting lost sinners to him, and edifying, comforting, sanctifying, and building up saints in the faith of him. Once, when in his former stedfastness his soul was full of zeal, and all on fire for promoting this blessed work. But now, alas! like Samson, his locks are shorn, and his strength is gone. The Lord is departed from him, and he is grown weary and faint in his mind, he has sadly lost love to Christ, and precious souls, to the stumbling many, and distressing more of God's people: but to the triumph of Satan, and the rejoicing of the men of the world. Perhaps, for a season, he may carry this off with an air of unconcern; but sooner or later, conscience will be roused, awakened, and alarmed out of

its stupor, and then, O what horror, terror, dismay, and distress will it feel! but how sad, how awfully sad, to be haunted with its remorse upon a dying pillow. O may ministers consider this so as to avoid the evil.

Again, see the once stedfast, lively, warm-hearted Christian, who, wherever he came, his spirit was full of the unction from above, the sweet savour of Christ dwelt in his heart, and powerfully flowed from his tongue. He ever had a word to speak in season for Jesus, and unto his fellow sinners and brethren in Christ. The love of his Lord dwelt richly in his heart; and in the power of prayer to him, he sweetly poured out his soul before him. Christ was his glory. His love and salvation his theme. He had heaven in his view, and the world under his feet. Thus he lived to God's glory, and his conversation was blessed to the edifying of many, the comforting of more, and to the rejoicing of all Christ's disciples wherever he came. But alas! see him now he is fallen from his own stedfastness. His heart is cold to Jesus, his zeal for his glory abated, and his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, and is dumb to speak of him, to speak for him, and to pray unto him. O how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! is not this an evil much to be dreaded? suppose in this, as well as the former case, all the doctrines of grace are still maintained; and the doctrines of the saints' final perseverance held fast; yet, will not such souls find many suspicions, fears, and jealousies, lest they are not of the number of God's saints? and, will not their conduct sadly darken their evidence, of being interested in the love and salvation of the Son of God? for, where faith fails, and love abates, hope will be at a very low ebb, and comfort, joy, and peace forsake the heart. Are not these evils? evils ever to be dreaded by us? But,

Thirdly. How do any fall from their own stedfastness? by being led away with the error of the wicked. Being led away, is taken from the idea of a traveller who is seduced, or drawn aside from the right path: so professors are seduced from Christ, *the way*, the only way of present peace, and to future glory. And, it is the error of the wicked, of your wicked heart and mine, and of all the wicked on earth, to prefer any thing and every thing to Christ, and to the enjoyment of him. A most dreadful error indeed! happy for those who escape it, miserable for those who fall into it. For, those who do, lose their simplicity towards Christ, their poverty of spirit before him, their firm dependence on him, their sweet fellowship with him, and their devotion of soul to him. And instead of this, as they decline in spiritual prosperity, they incline to the things of this world, to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. They grow high minded, and do not fear falling.

They get to be vain confident in themselves, and forget that they stand by faith: even that faith which overcometh the world, through the victory of Jesus, which keeps the soul striving against sin, and resisting satan in the strength of Jesus, maintains peace with God, and peace in the conscience through the atonement of Jesus, lays the soul low in humility, and exalts it in the righteousness of Jesus, and makes Christ so precious to the heart, that it prefers fellowship with him far above all the vanities of time, and the enjoyments of sense. But, O how many are fallen from their own stedfastness in all this! how are they seeking living comforts from dead vanities! instead of God's truths.

How are they immersed in the world, and how eagerly do they pursue its riches, honours, and pleasures, contrary to the faith of Christ, hope in Christ, love to Christ, and the commands of Christ! O let us remember, thou who readest, and he who writeth, that we are still exposed to the evil and danger of all this, and liable to be led away by this, so as to fall away from our own stedfastness! O may the sight of our danger, and the conviction of the evil, ever live with us, that we may ever attend to the apostle's advice, **BEWARE**. This is the

Fourth point, The constant need we have ever to attend to this caution. Beware of sin, it is hardening and deceitful: of satan, he is subtle and deceiving: of the world, it is bewitching and alluring: of your hearts, they are treacherous and wicked: of professors, they may prove injurious and ensnaring: for all these unite, in the error of the wicked, to draw us away from our simplicity in Christ, and cause us to fall from our own stedfastness in him, and to him. Therefore, be cautious of these: be on your guard against these. Now this caution, beware, includes in it, watchfulness against all these evils; and prayer to be kept from falling away by them.

1st. Watchfulness. In all the declarations of the Lord, of keeping his people unto eternal life, not one of them tends to encourage sloth and carelessness; but to promote their vigilance and activity in the divine life. So far from being a Christian grace, it is nothing less than arrogant presumption, to pretend to trust in God's power to preserve us from our enemies, and falling by them, while we are careless, fearless, and unconcerned for any evil and danger from them, and neglect to watch against them. That man who says, Tush, there shall no evil happen to me, I am safe, the covenant is sure, God is faithful and powerful to keep me; therefore do not tell me of such low and legal stuff, of falling away, and of my watchfulness. Friend, take knowledge of thyself. Thou art already fallen from the doctrines of grace, into the error of the wicked. Thou hast only a notion of these doctrines in thy

head, without the grace and influence of them upon thy heart. For, gracious hearts feel the influence of gracious truths: and these excite to watchfulness, against every foe, and every idol. He who watches diligently, shall be rewarded amply. *Apollonius*, the oracle of his day, coming very early to the gate of *Vespasian*, and finding him awake, said to his companion, this man is worthy to be an emperor, he is so watchful. And so he was afterwards. So the watchful Christian shall reign over his enemies, and rule over his lusts, through the power of Christ. Watchfulness is our duty. Safety is of the Lord.

He that neglects to watch will be sure to smart. For there is not a foolish vanity in the world, but our hearts are deceitful enough to be ensnared by it, and wicked enough to leave Christ for it. Every wicked error has its seducing charms to entice our hearts from our beloved, our stedfastness in him, and our fellowship with him. Let us watch against a high opinion of ourselves, our gifts, attainments, and doings, lest we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, have slight thoughts of sin, low thoughts of Christ, and love to the world, so as to be blinded to the one thing needful. Watch against those professors of the day, who are all head, but no heart, life, nor love to the ways of God. Is the Son of God come? hath he given us an understanding to know him, who is true? Are we in him, who is true? Is he the true God and eternal life? Then watch against that cursed error of the wicked, which would rob him of his Divinity, and our souls of the glory and comfort of his being able to save us, and give eternal life to us, as very God of very God. Watch against that error of the wicked, which would take off the constraints of love from our minds, and induce to licentious principles, and unholy practices: or would cause us to trust to our inherent righteousness, and not glory solely in **THE LORD** our **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and in his righteousness *only*, imputed to us through faith. Every thing in the world is an idol, when put in competition with Jesus. Therefore, all that is in the world is to be watched against, and to be given up for Christ, that we may maintain our stedfastness in, and to him. "Little Children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John v. 20. And, that we make not an idol of our own power to watch; therefore,

2. We shall pray to him. Where Christ is really the one object of the soul, there will be a desire to walk humbly with him, closely to cleave to him, continually to abide in him, a constant fear of losing sight of him, and falling away from him: and this will ever excite a cry unto him, Lord support my standing. Lord, preserve me from falling. This prayer will humble us, and honour him. It will make us independent of ourselves, and dependant on him. It is going out of

ourselves, and going unto him. It is casting our care upon him, and trusting our souls, and our keeping, with him. O this glorifies him ! and what sweet satisfaction does it yield us ! St. Origen, going to comfort and encourage a martyr, was apprehended himself, and was constrained, either to offer to the idols, or have his body abused by a black-moor. To save his life, he bowed to an idol. But he afterwards made this sad confession, that he went out that morning without praying to God. This, he said, he assuredly knew to be the cause of that evil. Who knows what a day, big with events, may bring forth ? O Christians ! what comforts are enjoyed in praying ! how many blessings are lost by neglecting it ! ye have not, because ye ask not. James iv. 2. That is enough to shame us. Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full, says our Lord. John xvi. 24. This is enough to embolden and inspire us, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, to lift up our hearts to the Lord to keep us. Thus sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, let him be your fear and your dread, and he shall be for a sanctuary. Isai. viii. 13, 14. Then shall you not fear what the enemy can do unto you.

INFERENCE.

Gospel comforts can only be enjoyed in the obedience of faith, and stedfastness to the truth. How highly then ought we to prize the exhortations of the Spirit ! For they tend to make us watchful, destroy self confidence, and build us up in our most holy faith : so that Christ may be more precious to us, our heavenly Father more delighted in by us, and more of the holy Spirit's witness and assurance enjoyed within us. The more we live upon the word of truth, and the everlasting covenant of grace, the greater confidence shall we have of our safety and security in Christ ; and that " God who is able to keep us from falling, will assuredly present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy." Jude xxiv. Now to God, the friend of sinners, be glory to day and for ever. Amen.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, uphold us by thy free Spirit. We cannot stand one moment without thee. We cannot maintain our own stedfastness, but by thy power. Lord, work in us, both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Make us what thou wouldst have us to be in all things. O grant us to live by faith on the Son of God on earth, that we may reign eternally with him in heaven : to whom with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory in the highest. Amen.

The Ninth Lord's Day.

CHRISTIANS' DUTY TO THE FEEBLE-MINDED AND WEAK.

Now we exhort you, Brethren, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak. 1 Thess. v. 14.

THE higher the sun rises over us, the more it sheds of its influence upon us. Just so is it with the sun of righteousness. He arises first upon our souls with healing in his wings. Mal. iv. 2. His divine light clears up our understanding, chases the clouds of darkness from our minds, and heals the diseases of our souls. By his comforting rays, and cheering influences, he sheds the pardon of our sins, and restores us to the peace of God. Christ hath obtained both by the blood of his cross. And when he shines upon us, we feel the comforting influence thereof, applied to our souls, to their healing and joy. But the sun shines more and more to the perfect day. So does Christ the Sun of righteousness. Hence we see more and more of his love for us, the relations he stands in to us; and of our duty to him, and the various instances we are called upon, by which to glorify him in the world. And this is ever the most prevailing and powerful incentive to every duty, "We serve the Lord Christ." Col. iii. 24.

O how animating to consider, in every work of faith, and labour of love, we are doing the will, and rendering service to that God-man in one Christ, who offered up his life as a sacrifice for our souls, suffered the accursed death of the cross for our sins, and hath risen upon our souls, with his all-healing, and all-comforting beams! O ye sons of earth, and slaves of sin, talk ye may, and boast ye will of your good works, and what they will procure for you from God, and entitle you to before God. Yet how fatally mistaken, how awfully deceived are ye! for what are all your boasted works but splendid sins? What the end of all, but awful death, without the knowledge of faith in, and love to the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners? Hear the voice of your own church, of which you boast, and pride yourselves in being members of, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of HIS Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ: neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or deserve grace: they are not done as God hath willed and commanded, therefore have the nature of sin." Article 13.

But to you, upon whom the sun of righteousness hath risen, and healed your souls, that church proclaims, "Good works are

the fruits of faith, and follow after justification. Though they cannot put away our sins, nor endure the severity of God's judgment, yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, &c." Art. 12.

Now, here is a duty—duty did I say? the word by many is thought too low and legal. Then call it a high honour, an exalted privilege set before us, and which we are exhorted to. None but the children of the most high God, none but the saints of Jesus, the KING OF KINGS, are exhorted to it, or can perform it. Brethren, ye brethren of Christ, brethren of one Father, God; we exhort you, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak. As ye love Christ, the precious Saviour: as ye rejoice in his person, and delight in his service, shew your love to him, by your affectionate regard for his weak and feeble members. For, he says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. xxv. 40. Is it so? then shame on us, that this blessed work is so little understood and considered, and so much neglected by us. The Lord in mercy pardon us. The Lord in love stir us up to be more engaged in it. And the Lord help us to consider the nature and importance of it, that as we are to be put in mind, to be ready to every good work, Titus iii. 1, so may we be ready to this also. Therefore, let us consider what is meant by the weak and feeble-minded, and how we are to support the one, and comfort the other. O what honour does God put upon us.

First, who are meant by the feeble-minded and weak? Has Christ got any such in his family and flock? yes, and ever had. He bears a most tender regard, and affectionate esteem for them too. Look at the 34th and 4th of Ezekiel, and see with what tender concern he speaks of them, as diseased, sick, broken, driven away, and lost. Now, under these images, let us consider the feeble-minded and weak. 1st. They are diseased and sick. Natural disease weakens the body. Spiritual disease makes the mind feeble. To discover the nature of a disease, it is usual to feel the pulse. To discover spiritual disease, we must attend to the complaints of the tongue. Different diseases affect the body. So they do the mind. Some nervous, low-spirited people fancy, they have a complication of almost every disease you can mention. And so it often is with feeble minds. They complain of their head, eyes, ears, memories, their hearts and affections. So that they can neither see, hear, understand, receive, retain, and love the truth as it is in Jesus, nor Jesus, who is the truth, as they wish and desire to do. Yea, they complain of their very desires too, that they are cold and languid. Thus, their whole head is sick, their heart faint, and their mind feeble.

2. How are we to comfort such sick, diseased, and feeble minds? There is what the physicians call the *primæ viæ*, or the first passages for the chyle to pass through, in order to nourish and strengthen the body. Any obstruction here will bring on weakness and disorder. Thus it is in feeble minds. The *primæ viæ*, or first passages for spiritual nutriment, are disordered; and this keeps their minds weak and feeble. For they mistake the heavenly physician's love to, and compassion for souls. The method of his dispensing, and communicating his blessings and comforts, as well as whom he designs them for. Christ says, "The whole [the sound, whole-hearted, self-righteous sinner] needs not a physician, but they who are sick." Mark ii. 17. But feeble minds, because they are sick and diseased, foolishly think they are not fit for Christ, that they have no inward qualifications to commend and entitle them to his favour, such as strong faith in him, great love to him, vehement desires after him, burning zeal for him, and unremitting obedience to him; and, therefore, they are not looking to Jesus, nor expecting blessings and comforts from him. Now we are to point out to them, that an enemy, the enemy of souls, hath done this. He hath sowed the tares of falsehood among the seeds of truth in their hearts; and these keep their minds weak and feeble. Therefore, in order to comfort them it is necessary,

3. To explain to them from the scriptures the absurdity of their notions—the inconsistency of their conduct—the free access sinners, as sinners, have to Christ—the free, unmerited, unconditional love he bears to them—the fulness of that salvation he has wrought out for them—his loving invitation to them—his readiness to receive them—his hearty good will to bestow every blessing upon them—and all this, because of the relation he stands in to them, on account of his covenant engagements for them. Now, how extremely ridiculous and absurd had the diseased persons, in the days of Christ's flesh, reasoned and acted thus? If the blind had said, I have no sight to see, so as to be delighted with Christ's glorious person, therefore I am unfit to go to him, or expect sight from him. If the deaf had said, I have no ears to ear his joyful voice, and delightful words, therefore, what can I expect from him? he will never think me worthy to restore hearing to. If the leper had said, I am a most loathsome, infectious creature, overspread with running sores and ulcers, I have every thing about me to make Christ abhor me; but nothing to recommend me to him, therefore what hope can I have of healing from him? Besides all this, they might all have united in this objection, common to each of them, I am a sinner, and Christ, the Son of God, is a holy person, separate from sinners, therefore, he cannot ad-

mit such a vile wretch, as I am to come unto him ; he must so despise my character, and abhor my person, as not to bestow any blessings upon me. But how did Christ behave to such ? How did he treat them, when they came to him ? With an air of contempt and disdain ? far from it. No, he received them graciously, and conferred blessings on them freely. He never sent one away from him, without a blessing, who came to him. Therefore,

4. We are to comfort feeble minds with Christ's own words, which he sent to John, as a sure criterion that he was the true Messiah. " The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk ; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear ; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matt. xi. 5, 6. Did Christ so love the bodies of sinners diseased and disordered as they were ? Did he freely perform such miraculous cures upon them ? Did he assign these acts of his love and power to the vile and worthless, as a certain evidence, that he was the true Saviour ? And were these, his cures upon the bodies of men, emblematical of our souls' diseases ? Has he so loved the bodies of sinners, as to heal and restore them of their disorders ? Has he not as great love for the souls, the immortal souls of sinners ? Is he not full as ready to heal them also, be their spiritual maladies what they may ? Thus we may reason with, and comfort sick, diseased, feeble minds. But farther,

5. We may ask the feeble-minded, yea, ask ourselves also, if we are feeble-minded ; for we ourselves may not be excluded in this exhortation. Therefore, every man may and ought to be instrumental in comforting his own mind, as well as others, by using all proper means conducive to that end. I say, we may ask the feeble-minded, are you poor, spiritually poor ? are you destitute of the image of God, and have you nothing but rags, filthy rags, to hide the nakedness of your soul from his sight ? have you no worth or worthiness about you to purchase his favour, and entitle you to his love ? are you stript of all, and destitute of every thing, to make you meet for his regard ? have you nothing, which you can call your own but sin ? and are you nothing in yourself, but a poor, wretched, cursed sinner, cast out from the presence of God, to the loathing of yourself, and all that you are ? what says our Saviour of such ? Verily, " to the poor is the gospel preached." This is the good news, or glad tidings, of the unsearchable riches of Christ : you cannot be too poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked for him ; for he counsels such to come to him. Rev. iii. 18. that they may rest in him. For though we have nothing in ourselves, yet we have all in him. Though we are naked,

yet we have a glorious robe of righteousness in him. Though we have no worth, or worthiness in ourselves, yet we have every worth, and all worthiness in him. For this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save SINNERS. 1 Tim. i. 15. Such we are, such all men upon the earth are, and such all will be, while in this body of sin; and therefore this faithful saying is ever worthy of all acceptation by us, at all times, and under all circumstances, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. So that though we are poor, wretched, cursed sinners in ourselves, yet we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in him. Eph. i. 3. Though in ourselves cast out from the presence of the Lord, and unworthy to appear before him, yet God hath made us accepted in his beloved Son. Eph. i. 6. We have access with boldness unto God by him, and Christ hath consecrated a new and living way, through the vail of his flesh, for us to draw nigh to God, [at all times] in full assurance of faith. Heb. x. 20, &c. Thus, though poor and lost in ourselves, yet we are found in Christ, restored to the image and favour of God, in Christ; and enriched with all the blessings of his love, and the comforts of his salvation. For, we sinners are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

6th. This is the gospel, and this gospel is preached to the poor. And by this gospel, feeble minds are to be comforted, and the weak supported, and by no other means. Therefore, says the Lord, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Isai. xl. 1. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, [to the miserable] and the God of all comfort, [to the wretched] who comforteth us in all our tribulations, [whether inward or outward, whether of body or mind, to this end,] that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." 2 Cor. iii. 4. God is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, only as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him. Oh, says the feeble-minded and weak, this is comfort and support indeed! but here is the turning point, to know that we are God's people, whom he commands to be comforted and supported, and that God is our God and Father in Christ. O could we but know this, verily our feeble minds would be comforted, and our weak hearts supported. Would they? then we have another precious word of comfort and support for you from Christ.

7. He adds, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Now here is a plain question for you. Much comfort, great support is contained in it. You are offended with yourselves, because you are sinners, and at sin, as the cause

of all your misery. Pray now are you offended in Christ? this is the point. How does Christ appear to you, as held forth in the gospel? Are you not offended in the meanness of his person as perfect MAN, the Son of poor Mary, and a mean carpenter, yea, a carpenter himself? Are you not offended in his person, as God-man in one anointed Jesus, the Saviour, at his wonderful humility, as a poor man, and his striking condescension, as the Almighty God; and that the God-head shines in his humanity, and every attribute and perfection of deity, is glorified in Christ's flesh; and that God can only be known, loved, and rejoiced in by us, guilty creatures, but as made manifest in the flesh; GOD IN CHRIST reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,—are you not offended at this? Are you not offended at Christ in his offices, as the surety for sinners, to make atonement for sin, to obey the law in their stead, to bring in a righteousness to justify them, and to work out a salvation for them; and that every blessing of grace and glory should be communicated unto them out of his fulness: that he is a prophet to teach us, a priest to intercede for us, and a king to reign over us by his power, and in us by his word and Spirit, so as to subdue sin under us, and perfect holiness in us; and that in all things, Christ should have the pre-eminence?

8. Is there nothing in all this, but what in the spirit of your mind, you approve of and acquiesce in? And do you desire to have no hope, no comfort, no support, but what comes from Christ? Can you answer in the affirmative? yes, say you, most heartily. O none but Christ, none but Christ! may he be all in all in me, and to me. But I find the flesh, with its affections and lusts, warring in me, sadly opposing me, and dreadfully rebelling against me. So did Paul. Rom. 7. So do all saints in Christ. This is a blessed sign of spiritual life from Christ, and your complaints of it evidence, that you are a member of him, through faith in him; and therefore he pronounces, Blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me, but looks to, and believes in me, as the only Saviour from sin, death, and hell, to righteousness, life, and heaven. He, whosoever, or whatsoever he be, he is blessed by my tongue. He shall be blessed from my heart. He shall be blessed with my love, and kept by my power. He is passed from death to life, and shall never come into condemnation. Though he is a poor, bleating sheep, yet he knows my voice, he will follow me. "I will give unto him eternal life, he shall never perish, and none shall pluck him out of my hands." John x. 28. For my Father loves him, I love him, and the holy Spirit loves him. This threefold cord of love shall never be broken. I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed. Only let that blessed

soul be not faithless but believing. Let him hang upon my word, and though he has nothing else to comfort his feeble mind, and support his weak heart, yet let him rejoice in my word, and "Bless himself in me, the God of truth." Isai. lxxv. 16.

9. What! all this without any thing found in me worthy of it? O thou poor feeble-minded, weak-hearted sinner, what wouldst thou, what canst thou do to deserve this? Thy notion of doing in this way, keeps thy mind feeble, and thy heart weak. Remember, Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister relief to thy guilty conscience, comfort to thy feeble mind, and support for thy weak heart, and to give his life a ransom for our sinful souls. Matt. xx. 28. O receive this cup of comfort, this cup of salvation, at the hand of the Lord! for he says, Let the weak say I am strong. Joel iii. 10. Paul takes up the words, and in the experience of faith says, When I am weak, then am I strong. 2 Cor. xii. 10. How? strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: though all feebleness, and nothing but weakness in myself. He looked to the Lord in all, trusted the Lord for all, relied upon the Lord through all, and under all, and to the Lord committed all. Thus do thou; Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. Psalm lv. 22. Surely, if Christ bore all our sins in his own body upon the tree, we can neither doubt his love nor his power to comfort our feeble minds, and support our weak hearts, for he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Heb. xiv. 15.

Hence see what provision there is in the covenant of grace, entered into by the coequal THREE, for the support and comfort of the feeble-minded and weak. "This covenant is everlasting, well ordered in all things, and sure." 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. For we have the sacred word and solemn oath of God to confirm it, and the blood of his Son to ratify it. And that we might trust in, and rejoice on account of it, the holy Spirit has revealed the blessings and comforts of it in the gospel. To him let us look for the increase of faith in it.

A COLLECT.

O THOU Saviour of sinners, and physician of souls, save and heal us. Strengthen out feeble minds, support and comfort our weak hearts by faith in thee. Lord increase our faith on thee. Lord we are nothing but feebleness and weakness in ourselves, O make us strong in thee, and in the power of thy might. From a sight of our weakness, may we come unto thee, and from a sense of our feebleness may we ever lean upon thee: thus may we walk under the teaching of thy Spirit, now and ever. Amen.

The Tenth Lord's Day.

ON OUR HOLY AND HEAVENLY CALLING.

Wherefore holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly Calling, consider the Apostle, and High Priest of our Profession, Christ Jesus. Heb. iii. 1.

It is a great mercy, and inestimable privilege, for a Christian clearly to distinguish between flesh and spirit, as he is the subject of both: and in the light of the scriptures plainly to see, how these are ever contrary to, and continually lusting against, each other. But, alas! we are too apt to blend and confound these two opposite natures together, instead of considering them ever at variance with each other. Hence arises our mistake in judging of our state, and our perplexity of mind concerning ourselves; so we get into doubts and fears, do not walk comfortably before the Lord in peace and love, and serve him with a free spirit in righteousness and true holiness, as we are called to. Let us look to the Lord, and pray him to give us a right judgment in all things, while we meditate upon this part of his holy word. O may he make our meditation sweet to our hearts, and profitable to our souls, to the honour of his free grace, and for the glory of his blessed name in Christ Jesus!

These two points are plainly held forth to us in the text. In humility of heart, and sincerity of spirit, let us closely attend to them. 1st. The description of the persons here addressed. And 2d. what they are exhorted to.

1st. The description of the persons here addressed. 1st. They are called holy brethren. But were they not men in the flesh, sinners like other men, having a carnal nature in them, contrary to the law of God, and ever lusting against the Spirit of God? were they in a state of perfect holiness, and freed from the very being of sin? No. We dare not say this of them: for this is not true concerning them; but is directly contrary to the confession they make of themselves. Holy Paul, the author of this epistle, and holy Barnabas, when the people had entertained the highest opinion of them, and were about to deify them, they cried out, with abhorrence, "Sirs, we are men of like passions with you." Acts xiv. 15. Paul confessed of himself and his holy brethren, "That they lived in the flesh, and walked in the flesh." 2 Cor. x. 3; Gal. ii. 20. "And that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that sin dwelleth in me." Rom. vii. 18, 20. "And that we ourselves also are found sinners." Gal. ii. 17. And holy John says, "If we say (I a holy apostle, or you holy brethren, if any of us say) we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,

and the truth is not in us." 1 John i. 8. How then could they be holy? Why are they called *holy* brethren?

2. Here is the great mystery of godliness; that man, the fallen creature of an apostate parent, a sinner, in whose nature sin dwelleth, and nothing but sin; who can of himself do nothing but sin; and in all he does, sin cleaves to him, that, notwithstanding all this, this very same vile, polluted sinner, should be called, what he really is, *holy*. No two things in nature can possibly be more opposite to each other than sin and holiness. And yet man, every regenerate man, is the subject of both,—the miserable subject of the former: the happy partaker of the latter. By nature we are all conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. We love sin, live under the pleasing reign of sin, and are the willing slaves to the power of sin. By grace, the free favour of God bestowed upon our souls, we are born again of God's Spirit into the kingdom of his beloved Son, are united to him by faith, become one with him in spirit, and are made partakers of his holiness. Hence it is that we are called *holy*, *holy* brethren: *holy* in, with, and by Christ; brethren of Christ, and of all those who are sanctified in Christ, and saints of Christ. Thus being married to Christ, we are called after him according to our new and *holy* state *in him*.

3. Now, we see plainly in the scriptures how this is effected. And we can also rationally account for this. For just in the same way as we partake of the first Adam's sin and pollution, even by a birth into nature; so we partake of the second Adam's holiness, by a new birth of the Spirit *into him*. But, this new birth of the Spirit does not annihilate, or root out the being of sin, or kill the life of sin in our flesh, though it does the love of sin. No, there it is, and there it will remain in all its parts; dwelling with us, working and raging in us, opposing and warring against the law of our minds, lusting and desiring against the Spirit, to be gratified. Like the shadow of ourselves, it ever follows us, and is ever present with us. No place, no company, no exercise or engagement, be it ever so *holy* or spiritual, can separate us from its presence, or divest us of its company. It is called "the *old man*, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts." Ephes. iv. 22. A man, because whole and entire in every part and faculty, not part of a man; not the remains of a man; but a whole and perfect man of sin. It is an *old man*, because almost coeval with the creation of man. It is corrupt in every part; and every lust or desire of it is evil and deceitful. And, says the church of England, "This original or birth sin, [or this *old man*] or this [total] infection of nature, doth remain, [whole and entire, not the remainders of it, as though any part of it were taken away in regeneration,] yea in them who are regenerated. And in them also it deserveth God's wrath and damnation, equally in them as in others." Art. 9.

4. This is an awful lecture for the regenerate and holy brethren of Christ. For the truth of it, I dare appeal to the experience of each one of them. Say, O reader, say O hearer of these words, How do you find it within yourself? Are you sensible that this old man is still alive in you? Do you feel his lustings, warrings, opposings, ragings, and rebellings against your better part, your renewed sanctified soul? Do you groan under them, and because of them, cry, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this vile body of sin, this ponderous body of death! this is a precious sign, a sure evidence that the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is a quickening Spirit to your soul, once dead in trespasses and sins; and that you are one of the holy brethren in Christ, and of Christ. You groan because you feel, which the spiritually dead do not. You feel carnal burdens, because your soul is spiritually alive. You cry to be delivered from them, because your soul is sanctified in Christ, and you are a holy brother of Christ.

5. And, as our new birth into Christ does not annihilate, root out, or kill the life and being of sin, which is in our flesh; so neither can this man of sin, this total infection of nature, annihilate, root out, or kill the life and being of holiness in our souls. No, blessed be Jesus, He is our life: the life of our souls, the life of our graces, the life of our sanctification. Though sin put him to an accursed death for us, yet sin can never destroy his blessed life in us. For he says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." John xiv. 19. As much as if he had said, it is as much impossible to kill the life of your souls, as it is to take away my life, which is essential to me as God. Such is this blessed life of God in the soul of man. Thus blessed are all the holy brethren of Christ. O how joyful is this to the faith of our hearts! This is the spring of all holiness in us.

6. Are you one of the happy number? if so, why are you ever looking to find any good in the flesh, or expecting any good from the flesh? it is your privilege, and ought to be your constant practice, to live in the spirit, walk in the spirit, judge of yourself after the spirit, to rejoice in your new, spiritual, and holy state, as a brother of Christ; and therefore to live above the flesh, all carnal views, all self-righteous confidences, all fleshly hopes, and to bring the flesh into subjection to the Spirit; to put off the old man, and to put on the new man more and more; so as to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh. This is the life of the holy brethren of Christ. But,

7. These holy brethren are also addressed as partakers of the heavenly calling. But why is it called a *heavenly* calling: 1st. Because the partakers of it are the objects of heavenly love,

even the love of the God of heaven, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. This is manifest, "For God so loved them, as to give his only begotten Son, to the end that they might believe in him, and not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. "Christ gave himself for their sins." Tit. ii. 14. And that they might believe, know, and enjoy this heavenly love, the Holy Spirit, by his almighty power, calls and quickens them, in their spiritually dead state in sin, to arise, go to Christ, and live by faith on him, to enjoy this love of heaven in their souls. If you are called with this heavenly calling, you have experienced this. O cease not to give thanks for it!

8. Secondly, This heavenly calling is a fruit of, and proceeds from heavenly election. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with ALL spiritual blessings in heavenly places, or things in Christ. This heavenly calling is one of those spiritual blessings. Why do we partake of it? the apostle tells us, "According as God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world." Ephes. i. 3, 4. This heavenly calling to Christ, is a full evidence of our election in Christ. And our election in Christ is manifest by our calling to Christ. Thus we can sweetly and scripturally reason of our election, by our vocation; and from our calling, to our election. Each confirms the other. Let us lie low and exalt high an electing God. For our calling is not a random, precarious work; but is according to the settled purposes of electing love.

9. Thirdly, Because this heavenly calling is from heaven, and to heaven. The outward call of the gospel is a common, general, and indefinite call to all who are under its sound. But this heavenly calling of the Spirit, by the word of the gospel, is special, peculiar, definite, and internal. It is a call to the soul from heaven, and it brings heaven into the soul upon earth, and a heaven of glory is thereby insured safe and secure to the called soul. For, the soul is called out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light; and from the kingdom of sin and satan, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In this kingdom reigns, ever reigns, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the holy Ghost. And the soul being called unto Christ, and into Christ, is under the spiritual reign of Christ, and enjoys those heavenly blessings in the kingdom of Christ. So that it is not so much a call, merely to hear and assent to the doctrines of the gospel, to receive them into the head, and to speculate upon them in the judgment; as it is to receive those doctrines in the love of them into the heart, as centering in Christ, making Christ precious to the believing soul, drawing it out after Christ, to have

Christ dwelling in the heart by faith continually: to live constantly upon the fulness which is in Christ, to enjoy fellowship in God the Father's heavenly love, God the Son's heavenly grace, and God the Holy Ghost's heavenly comforts, in the power of faith, and to the joy of hope. Such is the nature of this heavenly calling. Such is the life, the happy life of all those who are partakers of it. But how is this life to be maintained and enjoyed in all its comforts and influences? this will appear by considering,

10. Fourthly, What these holy brethren of, and called by the Lord, are exhorted to. "Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." The exhortations of God's word are very profitable to our souls. They ought to be greatly esteemed, and highly prized by us. For, how animating, how encouraging are they to us! Marrow is contained in them. Fatness drops from them. "Their pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." Prov. xvi. 24. While we most highly esteem the doctrines of grace, let us no less prize the exhortations of love. Does the former administer hope from the Lord? the latter tends to excite joy in the Lord. Consider, ye poor sinners, the inhabitants of a body of sin and death, who so often consider the deadness of your vile bodies, and the life of your cursed sins, your deadness to duty, and in duty, your short coming in all your doings and performances, &c. to animate and enliven your poor hearts, in your darkest hours, dearest frames, and most uncomfortable feelings, from your sinfulness, ruin, and wretchedness: Consider him, who so loved your souls as to give himself for your sins, and to be condemned for you, that you might be justified *in him*; to be accursed for you, that you might be blessed *in him*. Consider Jesus Christ. O that precious name, Christ, the anointed of God, to be JESUS the saviour of sinners! We ought never to hear, or read of it, without emotion of soul, and joy of spirit! for, our all centres in that name. Our all flows to us from that name.

11. Consider Christ Jesus as the *apostle* of our profession. What is an apostle? a messenger, one who is sent on some errand, to carry messages from one party to another. This is the simple idea of it. So Christ is called "The messenger of the covenant." Malachi i. 3. how truly pitiable is the blindness of those who can see nothing of the everlasting covenant of grace, entered into by the Three persons in the sacred Trinity, and of their covenant, offices, and transactions, respecting our salvation, revealed in the scriptures; and therefore deny the very existence of such a covenant? for Christ is the apostle, or messenger of this covenant. What! a messenger to come upon an errand, and relate an account of what has no existence? no;

but he brings the joyful tidings of the reality of it to our ears. Yea, more, the very comfort and joy of it into our hearts. Consider Christ as the apostle of our profession, as the messenger, the sent of God, to reveal, manifest, and exhibit to us, what otherwise would have remained unknown by us, even the love, the everlasting, the covenant love of the whole Trinity for us.

Commission'd from his Father's throne,
Christ makes his love and mercy known.

12. O consider this blessed apostle of our joyful profession! Let our minds ever dwell on him, our thoughts continually go out after him, and our affections be constantly set on him! Consider Christ, not only as what he is in himself, but especially what he is in his office, characters, and special relations to us. The apostle or messenger to us, the representative of us, the surety engaged for us. The covenantee on our behalf, the alpha and omega, the first and the last, the beginning and end of our salvation, and the all in all of our profession. For, without Christ, what is all profession, but an unmeaning sound? what is all Christianity, but an empty name? what is all faith, but mere fancy? what is all hope, but vain delusion? yea, without Christ, thus considered, known, and enjoyed in the heart, what is life itself, with all its riches, honours, and pleasures, but vanity and vexation of spirit? without Christ, the hour of death is terrible, and the day of judgment horrible.

13. But we are not only exhorted to consider Christ as the *apostle*, but also the *high priest* of our profession. This office consists in his sacrifice for us on earth, and his intercession on our behalf in heaven. Christ saw that we sinners need both these; therefore he hath for ever effected the one by his death on earth, and he ever lives to execute the other in heaven. These enter into the essence of our faith, lie at the foundation of our hope, and are the spring of all our comfort and joy. Therefore, let us consider them deeply. Christ as man glorified, not himself, to be made an high priest, but he was called of God to it. God the Father says to him, "Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." Heb. v. 5. To this office, he was begotten of God. God's soul was well pleased with his undertaking it, and delighted at his executing it. For the glory of God is concerned, and promoted by the saving his people. Surely then, it ought to be our delight to study and consider Jesus Christ as the high priest of our profession.

14. Our sins, which are the cause of all our miseries, fears and distresses, doubts and sorrows, where are they? "For ever put away by the sacrifice of our high priest." Heb. ix. 26. Hence, God says, "Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more." viii. 12. This is our faith. This is our

profession. Well, but if Christ hath for ever put away our sins, and God will remember them no more, why is it that I have the sense of sin, sorrow for sin, and am distressed by sin? because you are a sinner, and the sense of sin will live in you, though the guilt of sin, and condemnation for sin, are purged away from before God, by our high priest. And by the faith of this, guilt and condemnation are taken out of the conscience, and peace prevails in the heart. Nothing but faith in Christ's sacrifice can remove the guilt and condemnation of sin from us. Christ's sacrifice hath for ever done this in the court of heaven. The firm belief of this effects in the court of conscience. "For, by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1. Ever consider this. Ever dwell on this. It is fit that a sense of sin should live with us, but not to distress us with hellish fears, but excite us to consider the sacrifice of our high priest, to make it precious in our eyes, and inestimable to our hearts, that we may believe in him, live upon him, love him, and be filled with heavenly peace and joy in him: ever seeing how much we are indebted to him, for this one atonement of sin, and his sacrifice of himself for sin. O reflect on this, and consider this more attentively than ever!

16. But say you, though Christ has atoned for my sins, yet I am a sinful creature still; therefore, what peace, what joy, what hope can I entertain, that I should ever be saved? Not the least in yourself. But here is the precious reasoning of faith. "For, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life, even his life of intercession for us in glory." Rom. v. 10. What! can you think God gave us his beloved Son to die for your sins, and Christ shed his precious blood to atone for your sins, will send your souls to hell for your sins? Dispatch the thought to hell from whence it sprang. Leave those to indulge it who know not the scriptures, and believe not the efficacy of his blood, nor the prevalency of his intercession. But do you consider your joyful state by the former, reconciled to God, at peace with God, and sins remembered no more by God; and your security by the latter, Christ's life of intercession for us. He lives, he ever lives; this *man*, as our high priest, he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; "Wherefore he is able to save us to the uttermost, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for us." Heb. vii. 25. As you believe, so shall you be comforted. Therefore,

17. Consider this, and be happy. Believe this, and be joyful. My dear fellow-christians, how do we kill our time, and our comforts, for want of considering what Christ hath done for us, and is to us! True, we profess all this; but we do not enough consider in our minds, and dwell on it in our hearts.

O, let not a sabbath pass, without deep, serious reflections on this. The sabbaths are days of rest to our souls. They are called the Lord's days. What! shall we let one of them pass, without deeply considering our Lord's death for our sins on earth, and his life of intercession in heaven for us? O, let it not suffice, barely to hear and read of this, without entering, by close consideration, into the life and spirit of these joyful truths. The Spirit is ever ready to help our infirmities while we are thus engaged. But do we not grieve the holy Spirit, by our neglect of this? Do not our working-days testify against us, that instead of considering the great apostle and high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, we are so much engaged in worldly affairs, that we can scarce think of him at all, from one sabbath to another? Is it any marvel, then, that our hearts should be dead and cold unto him, on his own day? What! when you have preferred every thing to him all the week, can you expect to find him the life and joy of your souls on his sabbath?

A COLLECT.

O LORD of all grace, who dost call us by thy power from our natural sinful, and unholy state in ourselves, to partake of thy holiness in thy beloved Son; grant us to conceive aright of this great mystery, that we may constantly live under its blessed influence. Teach us so to consider Jesus as our apostle and high priest, that all our hopes may centre in him, our affections be set on him, and our lives continually devoted to the glory of him, and of thee our Father in him, through the grace of thy holy Spirit. Amen.

The Eleventh Lord's Day.

ON CHRISTIAN CONFESSION.

They confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth. Heb. xi. 13.

How came they thus to confess? What was the cause of it? Were they not men of like passions with others? Were there not honours, riches, and pleasure enough on the earth when they lived? Doubtless. Were not these as much suited to their senses as to ours? Certainly. Were not their natural passions and affections as liable to be captivated by them as ours are? It cannot be denied. What then? Were they a set of sour, morose, peevish men, who were out of humour with the world, and every thing in it; and, therefore, as nothing pleased them, so they turned their backs upon, and forsook every thing in it, in a peevish humour, and a discontented fit? Or, because they found the world was set against them, therefore, from a spirit of resentment, did they set themselves against the world? Or, were their imaginations worked up by a set of whimsical notions, and irrational fancies, which they had imbibed, and therefore did they act thus? No. Nothing of all this was the cause of their conduct. But it proceeded from a rational understanding, a settled judgment, and a deliberate choice, founded upon the eternal nature and *fitness of things*.

Pray, now, suppose we were to see a person working and toiling at some painful, laborious drudgery, so that he could find little ease, less content, and no pleasure at all in life. And if a person of character and veracity were to say to him, why do you thus miserably drudge on, and drag this life so very wretchedly? for I assure you, yonder lives a person who will cordially receive you, heartily embrace you, and comfortably provide for you. Would he not attentively hear the report, most joyfully receive it, and if he really believed it, and was fully assured of the truth of it, would he not quit his painful toil, and laborious drudgery, and instantly set out to attain the hoped for comfort? And, pray, who among all the sons of wisdom or reason, would account this man a fool, or deem him a madman for such conduct? Just so wisely, and as rationally, did all these pilgrims and strangers act. For they found themselves such poor, pained, weary, heavy-laden sinners, in a world of woe, a land of sorrow, and a body of sin. Their heavenly friend told them of a place of happiness, invited

them to himself to enjoy it, and made precious promises to assure them of the certainty of their possessing it. They heard the report with pleasure, attended to it with joy, received it in faith, were persuaded of the truth of it, embraced it in the affections of their hearts, and therefore set out to gain the full possession and enjoyment of it. Thus they became, and confessed, that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Here see what true wisdom and solid reason there is in the choice and conduct of Christians. Let the men of this world account us fools and madmen, as much as they please; yet, blessed be God, we are not so left of him, as to prefer pebbles before diamonds, base metal to pure gold, husks to precious food, slavery and rags to a robe of righteousness and a crown of glory, painful labour, and servile drudgery, to rest and happiness, the baubles of time, to the glories of eternity, the vanities and trifles of the world, to the durable riches of heaven, nor the pleasures of sense, for the enjoyment of God. The end of all things is at hand. Then it will be eternally decided who are the wise, and who the foolish, who the madmen, and who acted under the influence of their sober senses, and solid reason. Then it shall be said by the wise judge of all, "Come ye blessed—Go ye cursed." This sentence shall determine the fate of all. And then, "Wisdom shall be justified of all her children." Math. xi. 19. Let us consider these two important things.

1st. That a real persuasion, and scriptural assurance in the mind, of the truth of God's promises concerning spiritual blessings and heavenly comforts, enter into the essence of true faith. And

2dly. That this faith so works by the love of God, and to those things that he hath promised, that it converts men into strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

O may the Spirit of the Lord sweetly and powerfully engage our attention, and animate our souls with such a lively prospect of heavenly things, that we may be more than ever strong in faith, joyful in hope, and comfortable in love, in our pursuit of them; so that our hearts may feel more alive to God, and a greater deadness to the world.

1st. A real persuasion, and scriptural assurance in the mind, of the truths of God's promises concerning spiritual blessings, and heavenly comforts, enter into the very essence of faith. The truth of this is fully confirmed by the faith and practice of the Old Testament saints, and also farther established by believers in every age. Our text informs us, "These all died in the faith." The faith of what? the promises of God, and the things contained in the promises. Where did they find these promises? In the word of God: spoken and given from the mouth of God. But how did they know that they belonged

to them, or that they had any right to them? this is a point that is much agitated, and is difficult to be settled. Many poor souls are sadly perplexed in their minds about it, and are hence in great perplexity, whether they really have true faith or not. As to any right to the promises, that point is settled in one moment. If any one is looking into himself, to find any thing in himself, which may give him any right, title, or just claim to the promises of God; or expects to find in himself any good cause, or just reason, to entitle him to these promises, above any other sinner upon the earth, he is a stranger to himself, and ignorant of the nature of God's promises. These saints of old did not, nor will any saint of God ever proceed thus. We hear not one word of this kind throughout the scripture. But these believers read God's word. There they found the promises, spoken from the mouth of God. They simply believed them. They gave credit to what God said. They took him at his word. They trusted in his word; and doubted not but that God would be as good as his word. Hence it is said, *having seen the promises afar off, they were persuaded of them, and embraced them*: they clasped them in their arms, hugged them to their hearts, and kissed them, in the affections of their souls, as seeing all their treasure in them, and expecting all their comforts from them. This is faith. **THE** faith by which they lived. **THE** faith in which they died. **THE** faith by which they were saved. For, by this faith they honoured God's word of truth, and trusted his promises of grace, which are all in Christ Jesus, yea, and amen, to the glory of God; and therefore he honoured them, and saved their souls, according to his word of promise.

Are you thus persuaded of the truth and reality of God's promises? Are they precious to you? Do you highly value and esteem them, yea, embrace them, in the love of your heart, and the affections of your soul, as containing all your salvation, and all your desire? this is faith, yea, the full assurance of faith. For, you are fully persuaded, and divinely assured of the existence of these promises, of the reality of the truths contained in them, and of the certainty of their being fulfilled by the God of truth, the promiser. The Lord help you to take the comfort of this, and to give him the whole and sole glory. It is due to him only. For, is your mind thus persuaded, thus assured? this, in the very idea of it, must imply an agent thus to persuade and assure the mind. Who but the Spirit of the Lord could effect this? Such power belongeth to God only. To persuade, is to convince of the truth, and to make one believe the truth of God. No human reason and argument, nor all the moral suasions of the most eloquent, no not even though one rose from the dead, can effect this. Luke xvi. 31.

Well, then, admit you do believe that you are fully per-

suaded, and divinely assured of the truth which you do believe, you may, and you will find unbelief working in you, and opposing your faith in its joy and comfort; and carnal reason suggesting many objections against the evidence of faith, the persuasion of faith, and the assurance of faith. What then, Are we therefore to give up our faith, stagger at the promises through unbelief, and quit our hold of the truth in our minds? No, by no means. The exhortation is, and it is ever needful for us, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering—why?—for he is faithful who promised." Heb. x. 23. So that you see, like the Father of the faithful, we are not to consider ourselves, our own strength and power, or our own faithfulness; but look at the faithfulness of the promiser, and go out of ourselves to him, crying, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. This confession becomes us, and this prayer is suitable for us every day of our lives, and every hour of our days. And this faith in the promise of God, this faith which is the gift of God, and is mighty through the truth and power of its author, will repel our unbelief and carnal reasonings; and is mighty through God to pull down the strong holds of Satan, to overcome the world, and to convert us into strangers and pilgrims on earth. It most certainly will.

This is our second point. What a mighty influence has truth upon the mind? But what an almighty influence hath the truth of God upon the mind? I had almost said, it will change a devil into a saint. And, indeed, so it would, had God given any promises to devils. But he hath not, therefore they continue devils still. Yet they believe: believe the truths of God. How does this affect them? "The devils also believe and tremble." James ii. 19. Why? Because there is no grace revealed for them, no promises from God made to them, no Saviour died for them. But unto us, [us men, us sinners, us ungodly, unrighteous, and unholy,] are given exceeding great and precious promises—to what end? "That by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Pet. i. 4. Here we see the glorious effects of believing, or receiving, the great and precious promises of God into our hearts, [1st.] That by these we are made partakers of the divine nature. How is this? Is not the nature of God incommunicable to us creatures? Yes. The essence of his nature is, but the properties of his nature may be imparted to us. How? Through our union to his beloved Son, who is God and man in one Christ. And when we receive the precious promises, then we are in Christ, united to, and one with him. Thus are we partakers of the divine nature. Christ is our life. His love is in our hearts, and his truth in our minds. We love what

God loves. We hate what he hates. "We delight in the law of God after the inward man." Rom. vii. 22.

Hence, (2d.) we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Thus we become strangers to the world, and confess ourselves to be pilgrims on the earth. Escape the corruption that is in the world through lust: what means this? Why, to fly from and avoid the corrupt principles, wicked practices, self-righteous hopes, and unscriptural confidences, which the men of the world indulge, through the lusts of their flesh, and the pride of their hearts. There is the filthiness of the beast in the former, and the pride of the devil in the latter. It is not possible to escape from these; but we shall become strange kind of creatures, indeed, to those whose chief comfort lies in gratifying their lusts, and whose greatest complacency consists in a proud notion, and high opinion, which they entertain of themselves, and of their own righteousness and goodness. Tell them of the precious promises in Christ, confess to them that all your hope consists in them, and that to enjoy the comfort of them by faith now, and the full fruition of them hereafter in glory, you turn your back upon the world, your face to heaven, and commence a pilgrim, travelling towards the heavenly country: I say, confess this, either by your tongue, or in your life, practice, and conversation, and they have no ears to hear you, no hearts to understand you, nor any patience to bear with you; but will cry out as they did of old, "Those who have turned the world upside down, are come hither also." Acts xvii. 6. You will surely become a stranger and an alien to them. And you will confess with Moses, "I am an alien in a strange land." Exod. xviii. 3. "For they are alienated from the life of God, walk in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Eph. iv. 18. If you speak the truth in love, and in any wise confess, that the life of God is in you, they will count you as a stranger, treat you as a stranger, and ridicule and despise you as a strange being, not fit to live with them, and consort among them. They will neither approve of your language, your clothing, nor your conduct. All will be disgusting to them, and they will be bold enough to manifest, that they are not ashamed of it. O how do the children of the wicked one shame many of God's children! while the former have not the least fear or shame in making it known whose children they are, and whom they serve, how many who profess to be children of the Most High, the brethren of Christ, and companions of the saints, yet trim, skulk, and hide themselves, and are so afraid and ashamed, lest it should be known that they confess themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth. "O this fear of man bringeth

a snare." Prov. xxix. 25. Many a dreadful snare upon professors.

But, O how sweet travelling, and by every step confessing, we are strangers to the men, to the ways, customs, and religion of this world, and that we are pilgrims on the earth, not looking on it as our home, but journeying through it, with God's precious promises in our hearts, Christ's precious blood upon our consciences, his glorious righteousness upon our backs, his everlasting love in our souls, his blessed Spirit our leader, guide, and comforter, and with a heaven of glory in our view, as our home ! O how joyful to have got over the slough of despond, to have passed mount Sinai's terrors, to have the wicked gate in our eye, and the love of the cross manifested to our hearts ! blessed be our Lord for this. His precious promises procured all this for us. They are still our staff, our support, and our strength. Leaning upon these we shall pass through the world, with all its scorn, contempt, and derision, with composure : pass over the river of death in the fulness of hope, if not in the plenitude of comfort : in certain safety, if not in the triumphs of joy. For they who say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a country. And truly, if we had been mindful of that country, from whence we came out, we might have had opportunity to have returned. But no, Jesus hath got our hearts, and our hopes. He is worthy of them. And now we cry, None but Christ, none but Christ, nothing but the enjoyment of Christ on earth, and the full fruition of him in heaven, will do for us, or can satisfy us. " For now we desire a better country, that is an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Heb. xi. 14, &c. O shame on us, that if God is not ashamed to be called our God, that ever we should be ashamed to confess ourselves to be his people.

Well, are you a stranger and pilgrim on the earth ? Do you confess it ? What think you of a pilgrim's life ? It consists in God's promises, and Christ's grace and salvation within ; and all opposition, contempt, and scorn from without, from the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is the portion of pilgrims. Is it enough for you ? Are you happy in the former, and content under the latter ? Well, then, go on and press forward. Look not back, nor to right-hand difficulties, nor left-hand troubles, neither to your own body, which is dead to this spiritual life, by reason of sin, and least of all consult not flesh and blood, your own corrupt judgment and carnal reasonings. Above all, cease from man. Judge not from the appearance of things. Weigh all things in the balance of the sanctuary. Oppose God's sacred truths and precious promises to all the lying suggestions of satan. Believe these strongly, live upon them con-

tinually, study them daily, yea hourly; meditate on them closely, prize them highly, pray over them fervently, take them as your guide, your companion, and your familiar friend constantly, and conform to them diligently. Though, as other pilgrims and travellers are, you may be overtaken with a night of darkness, and beset with storm and tempest, yet all above is serene and heavenly, therefore why should not all within be composure and peace?

For, are you persuaded and assured of the truths of God's promises in Christ? Do you embrace them as the glory of your heart, the stay of your mind, and the joy of your soul? Have you received that grand, capital, fundamental, chief promise of all, God's only begotten Son? Then you have every one of God's precious promises, in and with him. For they are all *in him*. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him with thanksgiving, as a poor sinner, without strength and righteousness in yourself, rooted in him, as a branch in him, receiving all your life and nourishment from Christ the root, built up in him, as the foundation of all your hope towards God, established in the faith, so as to have no doubt of the perfection of Christ's righteousness and atonement; and of perfect freedom from all condemnation of the law against sin, perfect forgiveness of all sin, perfect justification of our persons before God, and final salvation into the enjoyment of God thereby, as you have been taught by the word and Spirit of God, from the pens of his holy prophets and apostles, the mind and will of God, concerning your salvation by the Son of God, without adding any thing to it, or diminishing aught from Christ's perfect work, abounding therein, living upon all the fulness, enjoying all the plenty, and being satiated with all the abundance of grace which is stored up in Christ, for all his weak and needy members.

O pilgrim, the first breath you breathed in spiritual life, and the first step you took in the heavenly road, was from the fulfilment of the promises of God upon you. That you continue to live, and go on in your pilgrimage, is owing to the faithfulness of God, the promiser, to you. That you persevere to the end, is because God changeth not, but whom he loves at first, he loves to the end; and, therefore, as his love cannot fail, his promise is sure to all the seed, who are the heirs of promise. O look at that blessed, joyful word of God, for the support, comfort, and strong consolation of all these! Heb. vi. 17, &c. And, therefore, abound in thanksgiving to God the Father, who is the promiser, to God the Son, in whom all the promises centre, and to God the Holy Ghost, who hath revealed the promises, persuaded and assured you of the truth of the promises, and brought you, a poor sinner, an ungodly wretch, to

receive and embrace these promises. O let praise abound daily, and thanksgiving ascend continually from your lips, from your heart, and from your life, that you confess yourself a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth. Thank the Lord in private, praise him in public. Go to his house on his holy day, worship him in the beauties of holiness, and with the great congregation. join to make his name and his praise glorious in the earth. Thank him for his sabbaths, and praise him on his sabbaths. Praise him every day of the week, and every hour of the day. Let praise be thy constant work, and thanksgiving thy continual employ, until thy praises on earth end, and eternal praises in heaven begin, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three persons in one Godhead. Amen, and Amen.

A COLLECT.

O LORD Christ, thou heavenly friend, lover of sinners, and Saviour of the lost, convince us more and more of the necessity of our taking up our cross, and following thee, living as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, that we may enjoy more holy fellowship with thee, and more heavenly comforts from thee. Lord, teach us daily to deny ourselves. Deliver us from all self-pleasing, and self-exalting aims. O make it our one business on earth to serve and please thee in all things. Lord increase our faith, enliven our hope, and inflame our love to thee, for the honour of thy name, and the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen.

The Twelfth Lord's Day.

REMEMBERING CHRIST'S WORDS, THE BEST ANTIDOTE
AGAINST UNBELIEF, &c.

And they remembered Christ's Words. Luke xxiv. 8.

O YE disciples of Christ, and thou too, my soul, why, O why, are we so often bowed down, our hearts dejected, and our spirits distressed? Why are we not always comfortable in Christ? Search the cause of this to the bottom, and we shall find, that our knowledge of Christ is clouded, our faith in him starved and weakened, our love to him cold, our delight in him and his holy ways checked, through forgetfulness of his precious words. For these beget the knowledge of him, faith in him, and love to him. By these knowledge grows, faith is increased, hope strengthened, and love inflamed. If so, how do we injure our precious souls, by neglecting, forgetting, and being unmindful of Christ's words? The Lord pardon us for this our folly, and quicken in us greater attention to, and stronger remembrance of his words!

Let us, first, briefly consider the distressing frame of mind our Lord's first disciples were now in, and the means of their deliverance from it. Secondly, the blessedness of remembering Christ's words, in and under all our various circumstances. And if the Lord is pleased to give us light and liberty, we shall see much of our own case and experience herein. The Lord grant we may, to the humbling our souls before him, establishing our faith in him, and obtaining comfort from him.

First. The distressing frame of mind which our Lord's disciples were now in. They were deprived of his presence. He had been violently taken from them; unjustly and inhumanly crucified before them. And not only was his holy life taken away, but his precious body also (as they thought) stolen out of the sepulchre. Hence their perplexity was very great. Their doubts many. Their faith ran low. Their reason was nonplussed. They were ready to stagger through unbelief. Their hope was at the last gasp, and they were ready to give up, and give over all for lost. For all appearances were against them. This was a season of great calamity, and sore distress to them.

Secondly. How were they delivered from these trying and distressing circumstances? Mind, these disciples, though all in nature and appearances was against them, yet they came early to the sepulchre on the Lord's day to seek him. Though

their Lord was dead, the joy of faith failed, and the comfort of hope fled; yet duty was theirs, and they pursued it. They did not indulge sloth, though they were not warm and comfortable in their frames. Much less did they go to satan's fire of sinful diversions, the pleasures of sense, and the vanities of the world to warm them. No, their hearts were set on Christ. The desire of their souls was to him. They sought him. They pursued every means to find him. They gave not over, till they heard good tidings of him: yea, till they actually saw him, whom their souls loved. Most excellent lesson to us. For whatever may be our frames and feelings, however gloomy and discouraging our circumstances, yet seeking the Lord, and using all means to obtain the sense of his presence, and the comfort of his love, ought never to be neglected by us; but should ever be our unremitting study, and our constant practice.

Thirdly. For our encouragement to this, see in the midst of their perplexity, how graciously the Lord dealt with them. "Behold two men in shining garments stood by them." Ver. 4. What a proof of the divinity of our Lord, and of his love to his disciples! as the God of the whole earth, and the LORD of the heavenly host, he sent these angels to testify of him, and that his human body was raised from the dead. "Thus, they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them, who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. i. 14. What do they minister? First, a tender expostulation, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Secondly, a joyful declaration, "He is not here, but is risen." Thirdly, a precious excitation to their memory, "Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, that the Son of man *must* be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and rise again the third day." In transcribing these words, I was greatly struck at that little word *must*. I therefore put it in italics. Do not you see great glory in it? I do. O how much is contained in it! the whole plan of our salvation, and the glory of the whole Godhead. He *must* be delivered—he *must* be crucified—he *must* rise again. Why *must*? He was bound, engaged, and obliged to this, by covenant agreement with God the Father, and God the Spirit. O blessed *must*! all was in love to us, and for the salvation of us. Jesus inspire us with warm love and thankful hearts!

What was the consequence of this ministry of angels? Most blessed one. These disciples remembered Christ's words, and returned from the sepulchre, greatly satisfied, and much comforted. But why this round-about way, to bring to pass this end? Why did not our Lord himself appear to them, and at once solve their doubts, relieve their perplexity, and scatter

their fears? Or, why not by the sovereign agency of his Spirit, effect this on their minds? In this, and every other of his dealings, let us bow to his divine sovereignty, and adore his infinite wisdom. He cannot err. His ways are best. It is our duty to pray, and our wisdom to strive to profit by all. And he hereby teaches us these two things. First, that the ministry of his word is of his own appointing, for those very ends and purposes, which he hath ordained. For, he says, "My word *shall* not return unto me void, but it *shall* accomplish that which I please." Isai. lv. 11. Here is a sovereign declaration, and an absolute promise. The Lord's glory and truth are engaged in it. It is not left to the will and power of the minister who dispenses it: nor to the caprice and humour of those who hear it: but to the agency and power of God the Spirit, to make it effectual. Love then those ministers who preach Christ's word; but look through them, to the Lord the Spirit, for his blessing to make the word profitable. "Therefore, despise not prophesying," (or preaching.) 1 Thess. v. 20. "Be not wise in your own conceits." Rom. xii. 16.

5. Secondly. That it is our indispensable duty to attend upon the ministry of Christ's word, to read, study, pray over, and believe it. "Faith comes by hearing the word." Rom. x. 17. And if Christ would not satisfy and comfort these his first disciples' hearts, without his own words, what reason have we to expect he will ours? None at all. For, he says, "He that will do my will, shall know of my doctrine." John vii. 17. His will is in his word. His word is his will. And by his word, he accomplishes his will in us, and brings comfort to us. So these disciples found it. "They remembered his words." And so shall we too, if we use the means for it. We shall experience the comfort and blessedness of it also, as they did. Therefore let us consider,

Secondly, The blessedness of remembering Christ's words. Here is a large field for our meditation. O that the Lord may help us to gather some balm of Gilead, aromatic spices, and flowers of consolation for the healing and joy of our souls! What are we to understand by Christ's words? Doubtless, the whole of what God speaks in the scriptures. They are the words of God. And Christ is God. Therefore they are the words of Christ. Now, first, who and what art thou who readest or hearest these words? Be your state and situation in life what they may, I will answer for you in general, that you are a sinner, a dying sinner, inhabiting a body of sin and death, and breathing in a world of sorrow, trouble and woe; and therefore, that you have need to remember Christ's words to support and comfort your mind. For they are the best and only antidote against the raging of our lusts, the working of unbelief, the sug-

gestions of satan, the troubles of life, and the fears of death. Let us meditate on each of these.

1st. The raging of our lusts, and working of unbelief. Pray distinguish here between the raging of lusts in us, and the reign of lusts over us. Our king may have many raging, rebellious subjects in his kingdom; but they do not reign over him; but he over them. "Every Christian, in and under Christ, is a king and priest unto God." Rev. i. 6. By the power of Christ, he reigns over his lusts. And by the grace of Christ he sacrifices them unto God. This is to be his constant work, for they will rage in him continually. Now what have we to relieve and support our minds against these? Christ's words, and remembrance of them. For he speaks most tenderly and affectionately to such. When the disciples were in a storm, the comfort of faith forsook them, the joy of hope deserted them, and fears prevailed over them; yet amidst all this, they discovered their faith, by going to Christ, with "Lord save, or we perish!" How did he behave to them? tenderly expostulates with them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" He instantly silenced the winds, smoothed the waves, and suppressed their fears. Matt. viii. 26. Why? Because they had great faith, no lustings, no unbelief? nay, the contrary is evident. So, if Christ dwell in your heart by faith, though this faith may be strongly opposed by the raging of sense, and the working of unbelief, still your faith will manifest itself by remembering Christ's words, and crying unto him, "Lord save or I perish." O this remembering Christ's words, calls up the exercise of faith, sets the soul in motion to Christ, puts honour upon Christ, and, as it were, awakes the power of Christ in our behalf.

So Peter walked upon the face of the great deep. For his Lord said, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." While he remembered these words, all was safe and comfortable. But, up sense, down faith, and unbelief prevails. He listened to the roaring winds, looked at the surging billows, consulted reason, lost sight of his Lord's words, and began to sink. Amidst all his frights and fears, what does he? cries in faith, "Lord, save me." Jesus heard and caught him. For he was within the reach of Christ's arm, and in the love of his heart. What said he to him? Lovingly reprov'd him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matt. xxiv. 31. As though he had said, how unbecoming are doubts to thee, my dear disciple, whom I have converted to myself, who believest my everlasting love to thee, and my almighty power to save thee from a sea of corruption within thee, and the power of unbelief which works against thee? Why dost *thou* doubt? thy little faith fixes on me, and cries to me. O remember Christ's words, under the

strongest working of unbelief, and the lowest ebb of faith. They will strengthen the latter, and weaken the former.

But say you, I have so many lusts raging in me. So had every one of these disciples. So had zealous Paul, and beloved John. They, not less than you : nor you more than they. "They had their fightings and fears, within and without, just as we have." 2 Cor. vii. 5. "Lustings and warrings in their members, like us." James iv. 1. "Fleshly lusts war against the soul." 1 Pet. ii. 11. "And lust against the Spirit in all the members of Christ." Gal. v. 17. Look at Peter. See how his lusts prevailed, and how dreadfully he fell. Yet remember Christ's words, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Luke xxii. 32. "Thus he prays for all believers." John xvii. 20. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Heb. vii. 25. Rom. viii. 34. He says, "Father, I WILL that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." John xvii. 24. And his loving word to us every day, and every hour of the day is, "Look unto me and be ye saved." Is. xlv. 22.

This fully implies that we are sinners : full of sin, all manner of sin, corrupt lusts and cursed unbelief. That none can save us but Christ, and that he would have us continually look to him for salvation. O this remembering Christ's words, and looking to him, will mightily mortify our lusts, and subdue our unbelief. For with Christ in our eye, and his words in our heart, we shall feel the power of his Spirit in us, giving us victory over all within us, and against us. Yes, and we shall find a blessed death upon our lustings after carnal pleasures, and sensual diversions, those cursed baits of satan, which ensnare the soul. For, whilst Christ has the throne of the heart, all that is contrary to him will be under our feet. Thus we are not only to hear and receive the gospel, but also to stand in it, and keep it in memory, by which we are saved unless—awful words ! "Ye have believed in vain." 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. What is that ? when the ends of faith are not answered in the conscience, to give it peace by the gospel ; and the words of Christ are not so retained in the heart, as to give us life and comfort, from his work, in dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification : and when we do not so love him, as to live upon him, and live to the glory of him. This is believing in vain : or professing to have faith in Christ, when we have not.

2d. Remembring Christ's words are the best antidote against satan's suggestions. Christ is the God of truth. Satan the Father of lies. All that he suggests is contrary to Christ's words, and makes God a liar. He is an enemy, a tempter, and an accuser. How are we to resist him ? "Stedfast in the faith." 1 Pet. v. 9. What is this but the truth of Christ's words which

we believe? How are we to overcome him? "By the word of the testimony of Christ." Rev. xii. 11. When Paul was buffeted by his suggestions and accusations, what answer got he from Christ? This precious one. "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xii. 9. No sinner can want more. Every believing sinner is interested in all this. For, whatever satan may suggest to the contrary, Christ solemnly asserts, "He who believeth hath everlasting life, is passed from death to life, and shall not come into condemnation." John v. 24. Fight the devil with Christ's words, as Christ did with the word of God. But what is Christ's grace? His free favour, working out salvation for, and freely bestowing it on sinners. Satan will ever be suggesting against this, to the dishonour of Christ, and the distress of our souls. To the devil's shame, his emissaries' confusion, and our souls' comfort, hear Christ proclaim his own grace. "I GIVE unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John x. 28. Here is both grace and glory in these words. Remember them in all your conflicts with satan. Hold them fast in your conscience, and hold them up as your shield of faith, against all satan's fiery darts, lying subtlety, and all the vile sophistry of men. For hear and rejoice, "God shall bruise satan under your feet shortly." Rom. xvi. 20. Poor conflicting, tempted, accused soul, remember this truth. Live upon it. Walk by it. The Lord grant we may.

3d. Remembering Christ's words is the best antidote against the world's troubles. Why? Because they support the soul under them, and lift it above them. Our troubles are all in the covenant, and spring from covenant love to us. Christ is the head of the covenant. He says, "In the world, ye *shall* have tribulation." Why? Because it is his will, he knows we cannot do without trials. Therefore we *shall* have them in number, weight, and measure, dealt out from the loving kindness of our Lord. It is our blessedness to see the Lord's hand in all our troubles, and to remember his words under every one of them. Most affectionate words! "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John xvi. 33. Peace and good cheer, in the midst of tribulations! Lord what a blessed master art thou! Lord increase our faith in thee, and love to thee? But, how is this peace and good cheer to be enjoyed? In Christ, and from him. For, both result from the victory of him. O, if we remember Christ's words, in and under all our troubles, we shall find the peace and good cheer of faith in Christ, and triumphantly challenge, who, or what, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution from men or devils, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword? Nay, in all

these things, we are—what? Poor, weak creatures. Yea, worse, vile and miserable sinners. But yet, O the joy of Christ's words? O the blessedness of remembering them! **WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH CHRIST WHO LOVED US.** Rom. viii. 37.

Lastly, Remembering Christ's words is the best antidote against the fears of death. Death is in our catalogue of mercies; and is one of our covenant blessings. "Death is yours." Why so? Because "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. iii. 22. How is this? Christ is God's Son. You are Christ's brother. God is your Father in him. The Holy Ghost is your comforter through the faith of him. Therefore, death is your angel, your friend, your servant, to introduce you into the fullest enjoyment of God your heavenly Father's love, God your Saviour's salvation, and God the Holy Spirit's everlasting comforts in the kingdom of heaven. True, natural fears will and may beset us, in regard to death and dying. But there is no way of overcoming them, but remembering Christ's words. For he has most solemnly assured us, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." John viii. 51. Marvellous! What shall he never die? Yes. But he shall never see death, in his dreadful form, and horrid appearance, as an officer of justice, commissioned by a God of wrath, to drag the soul to tormenting flames. But he shall see Christ, the resurrection and the life, who has conquered death, reigning over death, and commissioning death as his angel, to bring the soul to the enjoyment of himself, and to be with him in glory.

Hence, that precious minister of Christ, Mr. Darracut, (whom dear Mr. Whitefield used to call, The Star in the west) in his last moments cried out, "Is this death? Is this dying? O how sweet it is!" Thus remembering Christ's words, "I am the resurrection and the life, whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." John xi. 25, 26. We shall find them the most powerful antidote against the fears of death. Yea, we shall behold, "Death swallowed up in the victory of Christ," and joyfully exclaim, O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? True, "The sting of death is sin." That my Christ hath fully atoned. "The strength of sin is the law." That my Saviour hath perfectly fulfilled. Therefore, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, [over death, as the law is fulfilled, sin atoned, and justice satisfied] through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 54, &c. We enjoy this glorious victory by faith, remembering our Lord's words to his glory and our soul's comfort. For he says, "The words which I speak, they are Spirit, and they are life. John vi. 63.

INFERENCE.

By way of reproof. What is a Christian without Christ's words? Naked and defenceless: like a soldier, surrounded by enemies, without arms. See then your folly, who are unmindful of Christ's words. Hence it is, that you live so much at random, and walk so uncertainly and uncomfortably? Have you really the peace of God in your conscience, and the love of God in your heart? Do you hesitate? Are you in doubt about it? What! profess to be a believer in Christ, and not possess these? How do you live? What is your conduct? Do you keep holy the Lord's day? Do you walk in the Spirit every day? Or do you live after the flesh, give way to its lusts, and gratify its desires, by indulging yourself in carnal pleasures, and worldly diversions? One word to your ear, and may the Lord cause it to reach your heart. As sure as you are a living sinner, you sadly forget both your Lord and his words. Yea, you pour contempt on both. Mind what he says. "He who taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Matt. x. 38.

A COLLECT.

O Thou blessed Spirit, the glorifier of the Saviour, and the comforter of sinners, bring the words of Christ to our remembrance. O help us to remember them continually. Make them live in our hearts, support our minds, and influence our lives, now and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with thee and the Father, as to one God, be praises in the highest. Amen.

The Thirteenth Lord's Day.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

But without Faith, it is impossible to please God: for he who cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them who diligently seek him. Heb. xi. 6.

WHEN we recommend the amiableness of a person, it is usual to say, "It is but to know the man, and you must love him." I am sure this holds true of the infinite amiableness of our good and gracious God; for all who know him, will join the church in this description of him, "He is altogether lovely." Song v. 16. But, how do we know God,—come unto him,—please him,—diligently seek blessings from him, so as to be rewarded by him? This is the substance of our text. Blessed, for ever blessed be God! he hath not left us to dark conjecture, and uncertain guessing, about these most important points. Let us, therefore, briefly meditate on each of them; and, while we are thus engaged, may the Spirit of the Lord be with us, to enlighten and comfort our hearts, and sanctify our work to God's glory, and our soul's edification.

1st. How do we know God? By faith. What is faith? A relative term: it implies somewhat to be believed which we have heard of. Without this, faith can have no existence. But by believing, and studying the nature of what is reported to us, we get knowledge and understanding in our minds concerning it: and the more we find ourselves interested in the report, so much the more doth it affect us, and engage our attention; and we will not suffer any thing to attract our minds, and disengage our affections from dwelling on it. According as the strength of the evidence which supports the relation appears to our minds, so is our faith concerning it. There is no possible way of knowing God, but from the report of the revelation which he has given us of himself. No! do not his works proclaim him? Does not all creation, with one united voice, loudly declare: the hand which formed us is divine? See God in us, know there is a God by us. This is quite beside our point. We are not treating, whether there be a God, but of knowing God. To believe there is a God, and to know God, are two very different things: just as widely different, as to believe there is a king of England, and to have a real knowledge of this king: or to hear that this king is gracious, and to know it for ourselves, by partaking of his bounty. Or, suppose a child to be put at some great distance

from its parents, as soon as it is born, and it continues there till grown up to years of discretion, it may be told that it has a father; it may believe it; but this differs greatly from being brought to know its father, and to place a filial confidence in him.

Now, by faith in God's word, we come to the knowledge of God in our minds; for faith is the substance, and the evidence to the mind of things not seen. Just as a well attested truth about natural things, which we have not seen ourselves, but has been told us by others, gains the full conviction of our minds, and has a subsistence therein. Just so, though no man hath seen God, yet a clear and comfortable knowledge of God subsists in our minds, by the evidence of faith; for faith receives all its knowledge of God, from the revelation which God hath given of himself in his word. Reject revelation, and there is no ground for faith. Where there is no faith, there can be no knowledge of God: consequently, no coming to God, no love to him, fear of him, nor desire to please him.

Hence see the deplorable state of all who reject revelation through unbelief. With all their human wisdom, acquired learning, and boasted knowledge of God, they know no more of God than a Hottentot, and have no more love to him than a wild Indian. "For the world by wisdom [with all their natural wisdom, and acquired human abilities] knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21. And with all their pretended wisdom, while they reject and decry revelation, they proclaim their stupid, egregious folly. For they act just as wisely as though they were to shut their eyes against the light of the sun, tell us they can see very well without it, and grope for objects in the dark. See how they live and act. Just as all other heathens do, without Christ, "having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephes ii. 12. As to any knowledge of God, love to him, fear of him, and delight in him, they are rank atheists. Hence when troubles and disappointments seize their minds, and no God dwelling there, poor souls what do they? Fly to God for support? alas! they know him not. But in a fit of rage, and a frame of despair, they cowardly seek refuge from the instruments of death; desperately rush headlong into eternal destruction, and as it were, daringly tell God, with their expiring breath, "I defy your power, the life you gave me I will keep no longer. Infidelity is the cause of suicide. Men butcher themselves, because they know not God; and they cannot know him, because they reject the only mean of the knowledge of him, the scriptures. Now such are the wise and learned, who sport themselves with their own deceivings, mock and deride us for our faith. O may we pity them, and bless our God, that

he has not left us in their deplorable state, but has taught us to know him by faith.

But how came we to believe? "Faith comes by hearing the word of God." Rom. x. 17. Is the word of God sufficient of itself to beget faith? Doubtless, if there be in man an aptitude to receive it, and nothing in him to oppose and reject it. Adam, in his state of innocence, heard and believed God's word, and there was nothing in him to work against it. It had free course to his heart. Why did he disobey it? Because satan infused the poison of infidelity into him. That works in us all. Now can the letter of the word alone expel this poison, and produce faith in the heart? No: not without the agency of the Spirit, no more than Christ's call, "Lazarus, come forth," would have raised him to life, had not power gone with his word. For man is as spiritually blind and dead to spiritual knowledge, as Lazarus was when dead, to natural. And therefore, though the knowledge of God is so clearly, plainly, and expressly taught by his word, yet natural man has no eyes to see, heart to understand, or will to receive it. Yea, all that is in him is averse to it. Therefore, though the Spirit does nothing upon the instrument, the word, yet he graciously acts upon the subject, fallen man. He sweetly enlightens his understanding, rationally convinces his judgment, and powerfully persuades his mind to believe the revelation which God has given of himself. Thus faith to know God, is the gift of God, through the mean of his word.

When we thus know God by the truth of his word, and power of his Spirit, in what light does he appear to us? In the most gracious, amiable, and engaging one possible. For are we guilty sinners? Behold, he hath not revealed himself as armed with vengeance against us, to destroy us; but as, "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." 2 Cor. v. 19. This is the true knowledge of God. All other is but pretended knowledge, vain speculation, idle amusement, and pompous ignorance, which leaves men wise as fools, wicked as devils, and atheists in the world. Why so? Because it never attracts their affections to God, causes them to come unto him, delight in him, and seek to please him. For God out of Christ, is only the idol of men's vain fancy, and foolish imagination; which has no more effect upon the love of their hearts, and influence of their lives, than if they were to carve an idol out of wood or stone. But through this precious knowledge of God in Christ by faith, we guilty creatures, miserable sinners, find our hearts attracted to him. For by faith, what the scriptures reveal of God, subsist in, and make an impression on our minds. Therefore,

2dly. We come unto God, believing that he is, Just that,

and no other being, than he has made himself known, and declared himself to be, in his word: "God in Christ, reconciling sinners to himself; not imputing sin unto them;" but "pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin." *Exod. xxxiv. 7.* God freely loving, cordially receiving, and heartily embracing, all and every poor sinner who comes unto him. What is it to come unto God? Not any local motion of the body, from one place to another, but the going out of the soul, the hopes, desires, and affections to him, so as to come near to God, and dwell in God, in whom we live, move, and have our being; as the God of our salvation, by whom we escape death in whom we have pardon, reconciliation, justification, peace, and the hope of eternal life.

And this faith conceives of, and receives this truth of the Son of God, "No man cometh unto the Father but by *me*." *John xiv. 6.* As God is IN CHRIST, so we come to the Father by Christ. As sinners, we can receive no knowledge of God, nor find any way to come unto him, but through the humanity of his Son. "He hath consecrated a new and living way through the vail of his flesh, for us to draw nigh unto God." *Heb. x. 20.* This, only to conceive of in the mind, is really joyful; but O what transport of soul doth the poor sinner feel in coming to God through Christ's flesh! For all that Christ did and suffered in the flesh, we have to bring unto God, to plead before God, and to justify us in the sight of God, even his atoning blood, and perfect obedience unto death. When we come to God in this new and living way, we turn our backs upon our old and dead way, of coming by any thing in ourselves, our own works, or any terms and conditions we can perform. But in Christ we "have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him." *Eph. iii. 12.* O the joy of this coming unto God, to have a way of free access to him, holy boldness before him, and certain acceptance with him.

O believer, if this truth stands clear in your conscience, you will be a daily, an hourly, yea, a constant comer unto God in Christ, and by Christ! For you will continually see so many and great wants in yourself, which none but a great God can supply: so many numerous evils in yourself, which none but a gracious God can pardon: such a swarm of lusts and corruptions, which none but an omnipotent God can subdue. And, are you at times ready to despair of salvation, because of the weakness of your graces, and the strength of your lusts and corruptions? At such a season, come afresh to God with all your cares and fears, doubts and despairs. Hear, and let faith triumph. "Wherefore Christ is able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him, seeing (O ever see, ever fasten upon, ever plead this in your own conscience, and before

God) Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25. Now if you are a comer to God by Christ, and if your soul should not be saved, then Christ lives in vain, prays in vain, and his ability must fail, seeing he cannot effect what he lives and prays for. O see the cursed nature of unbelief! what a stab does it give to the glory of Christ! How doth it wound your own conscience, deject your heart, and dispirit your love and obedience. Resist it as your great enemy. Strive against it as your worst foe. Hear the word of God your best friend. Come unto him, and call upon him, Lord, I believe: O help my unbelief! O make me strong in faith, that I may give glory to thee! Hence, as the poet most sweetly and experimentally sings,

'Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find,
The holy, just, and sacred Three;
Are terror to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fears,
His grace subdues my sins.

So will you,

3dly, Please him. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Why so? Because where faith does not reign, pride and self-righteousness do. If any sinner on earth is pleased with himself, God is displeased at him. Why? because he looks at himself by the eye of sense, and rejects the righteousness of faith, and seeks to be found in himself, instead of being found in Christ. "In whom God hath declared himself well pleased." Matt. iii. 17. There is not a righteous character upon earth out of Christ: therefore God cannot be pleased with any sinner, but in Christ; and as clothed with his righteousness by faith. God and our hearts must be at one in this point, else we cannot please him at all. And this faith must run through all we do, or we cannot please God. "For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Rom. xiv. 23. And God cannot be pleased with sin.

But, O! how does faith animate the soul, to strive to please God in all things! For what truth proclaims, faith receives, lives by, and works from. Truth declares, "To the praise of the glory of God's grace, he hath made us, [us sinners] accepted in his beloved Son." Eph. i. 6. Then says faith, I dare not strive by my works, to make my person accepted before God. For this, instead of being humble faith, is arrogant pride, bold presumption, and daring unbelief. For it is renouncing God's truth, rejecting his beloved Son, flattering my vanity, deceiving

my soul, and is displeasing to my God. Faith rejects this with abhorrence, while the believing soul will cry with complacency; O what a debtor am I to the grace of God, for making such a vile sinner as I am accepted in his beloved Son. How am I bound by the fetters of love, and quickened by every endearing motive, ever to study and strive to please my God in all things, and fear to offend him by any thing! Please God! remember the grace of God: think of your being accepted in the Son of God, then, let what will present itself which may please God, and be to the praise of the glory of his grace; that is your indispensable duty, your inestimable privilege to do. O let faith speak, and love prevail, and obedience pleasing to God will not be wanting. Those who know God, not only come unto him, and delight to please him, but they are also

4thly, Diligent seekers of him. But why seek God, seeing we do know him, and have come unto him? Ask a miser who knows the value of gold, and has great store, whether he does not wish for more? So those who know God, seek to know more of him, that they may enjoy more sweet comfort in him, and more joyful fellowship with him, in all his persons, as their loving Father, gracious Redeemer, and holy comforter. So Paul, who had long known Christ, breathes this desire, "That I may know him." Therefore seek God in his house, on his sabbaths, in his ordinances, in our families, with our brethren, and in our closets: in the day of prosperity, and in the hour of adversity: in the time of life, and in the season of death. Yea, when we have sinned against God, we seek unto him. So then diligent seekers of God are sinners? They are, to the burden, grief, and sorrow of their souls. But to our unspeakable joy, we know by faith, we are justified, accepted, saved sinners in Christ. Then we may love sin, walk in sin, and find a plea for our sins in Christ. No, satan, thou adversary and accuser; no more than we wish to find an acute pain in our body, or the disaster of a broken leg, that we may apply to a surgeon for relief and remedy. But the blood of Christ is our only remedy for sin, and we seek to him, to have the pain and guilt of it taken out of our conscience, the love of it subdued in our heart, and the power of it mortified in our life, that we may walk before God in righteousness and true holiness. For this we diligently seek God, and cry with avaricious Paul, "That I may know him." Phil. iii. 10. Lastly,

We believe our God is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him. Pride avaunt! Thou hellish fiend, dare not lift up thy baleful head, as though it is a reward of merit. We detest the thought, and abhor the sound. We know our gracious God. Ourselves we know unprofitable servants, after all we have done, and in all we can do. Yet a reward is sure, though

merit be wanting. For God's reward is not given, as of debt for work done, or as wages to hired servants, but given by grace, of free promise made to his free men, his beloved children in Christ. God "gives liberally, [without merit in the receiver] and upbraideth not." James i. 5. for his unworthiness of the least of all his means. O what a gracious God do we know, come unto, delight to please, and diligently seek ! Let us look to him, cry to him, rejoice in him, and praise him now, for all that he is to us, has done for us, and in us. One word by way of

IMPROVEMENT.

Do you thus know God ? God in Christ ? a covenant God ? Then you are one of the most happy, highly-favoured beings out of heaven : for heaven is secure to you. Therefore, you ought ever to joy, and rejoice in God. I remember Paul, when reproving such, for not rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh, says, "But now, after that ye have known God,"—he corrects himself, "or rather are known of God." Gal. iv. 9. As though he would lead our faith from our knowledge of God, to his knowledge of us, and cause our souls ever to glory of, and rejoice in him, as having known us in the morning of eternity, loved us with an everlasting love, "and chose us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Eph. i. 4. And therefore, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. O how joyful is this ! so that you are not only bound by present grace, but also are under eternal obligations to everlasting love, to serve, honour, and glorify the Lord your God. O for stronger faith in this scriptural truth, that love to God may more and more abound, and our souls be soaring in the delightful expanse of God's eternal love and grace. Beware of those who cramp the pinions of faith, and clip the wings of love, by contracting our ideas of God's love, within the narrow limits of time, and the confines of sense.

A COLLECT.

O LORD open thou our lips, that our tongues may speak forth thy praise. Touch our hearts with a live coal from the altar of thy love, that we may give glory to thy name. Lord, what are we, that thou shouldst make thyself known to us ! once as dead before thee, and as blind to the knowledge of thee, as other sinners. O shew us our mercies, and convince us more deeply of our obligations, to love thee, serve thee, and walk worthy of thee to all pleasing, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory and honour, now and ever. Amen.

The Fourteenth Lord's Day.

ON SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION.

But we all with open Face, beholding as in a glass the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Cor. iii, 18.

WE all. Who? All the professors of Christianity? With equal truth say, there is not a blind man in the world. There is not a more prevailing error exists, nor which is more pregnant with destructive consequences, than applying the word **ALL**, so frequently used in scripture, to every individual of mankind. Just with the same truth and propriety say, every man in England, is actually a member of parliament? and apply *all* that is spoken of them, and transacted by *all* of them, to every man. Surely folly and inattention to the word of God, never appear more conspicuous than in this! Nor are they capable of doing a greater injury to the truths of God, and the souls of men, than by this. For hereby carnal persons, who are blind to the truths of the gospel, and dead in their sins, are presumptuously led to consider themselves included in the word **ALL**; when the scriptures are speaking of **ALL** the elect people of God, **ALL** the redeemed of Christ, and **ALL** the sanctified by the Holy Spirit: or when the apostles are speaking of themselves, and their holy brethren in Christ, and of the happy effects which were wrought in and upon them **ALL**, through believing the gospel, exclusive of **ALL** the rest of the world, which lieth in wickedness. But it is deemed charity, thus most uncharitably to apply the word, **ALL**, to the self-confident delusion, and awful destruction of the profane and ungodly. O, say they, the scriptures say, God loves **ALL**, Christ died for **ALL**, justification is come upon **ALL** MEN, the Spirit is given to **EVERY** MAN, and therefore—What? all men shall certainly be saved. That is right. The conclusion is just, from such universal principles. Therefore, let **ALL** MEN assuredly know this, that *no man* need fear God, sin, nor hell, for all is safe. All men shall be saved, let them do what they will. From such unscriptural charity, good Lord deliver us! Thus satan will extract venom from the sweet scriptures, and poison carnal minds by corrupting them.

But it is the experience of the saints in Christ, which is here spoken of, and of them only. There are two words in this text, which, by attending to and explaining, will unfold the sense and meaning of the whole. The first is active, "We beholding." The second is passive, "We are changed." From hence we

may raise this doctrine, That activity in duty is our's ; that the success and blessing upon it, is wholly from the Lord. O may the Lord give us the pleasing experience of this beholding, and the unspeakable joy of knowing that we are changed.

1st. Beholding. This is not a slight, hasty, superficial glance, like "A man's beholding his natural face in a glass, and going away, and straightway forgetting what manner of man he was." James i. 24. But it implies a fixed attention of the mind. Such a beholding, as the dear women were engaged in, when they saw our blessed Lord hanging upon the cross. Their whole hearts were taken up with it, "And their whole souls swallowed up in meditation upon it." Matt. xxvii. 55. Without such a beholding, men attain to no proficiency in any science. Because Christians are not more assiduously engaged in this, is the one grand cause of all their fears, doubts, perplexities, and complaints. Other things attract their attention, from beholding the one thing needful. Hence their misery. See that astronomer, with what intense application of mind is he engaged, in beholding the planetary system, and in considering the motions of the heavenly bodies? What pleasing knowledge does he gain! What satisfactory reflection does his mind reap hereby? But infinitely greater knowledge, and more comfortable reflection, does the heaven-born soul attain by this constant beholding. For,

2dly, It is with open face. We have no dimming, obscuring veil, over our eyes, as Moses had, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of what was prefigured. "They could not clearly see the shining of Christ in the countenance of Moses, because of the veil upon his face." 2 Cor. iii. 18. But blessed be God, this is done away in Christ: there is nothing dark and obscure in the gospel revelation: we behold Christ with open face, full of grace and truth. We plainly and clearly see him a *perfect man*, like unto ourselves in all things except sin. We behold him doing his Father's will, and finishing the work which he gave him to do, and thereby bringing eternal glory to his name, and an everlasting revenue of praise to the whole Godhead. For now the glory of Christ is unveiled, and blessed be God it hath pleased him to take the veil off from our hearts, so that we can clearly, and plainly behold the glory of God shining in the face, or person of Jesus Christ, as we can see the glory of the sun in the face of nature's creation. We behold Christ's obedience of life unto death, as our justifying righteousness, to the glory of God's grace: the atonement of his blood on the cross, for the pardon of our sins, to the glory of God's justice: his resurrection from the dead, for our acquittal from all condemnation, to the glory of God's truth: his being exalted to be a Prince, and a Saviour, to give us repentance and

remission of sins, to the glory of God's holiness : his intercession for us at the right hand of God, to bring us to eternal salvation in heaven, to the glory of God's power ; and that God hath made us accepted in his beloved, blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, "To the praise and glory of his grace." Eph. i. 3, &c. And that God hath united us to Christ, and made us one Spirit with him, to the glory of God's everlasting love ; and that therefore where Christ is, there most assuredly shall all his members be. O what a glorious beholding is this ! Now all this with open face, or in the unveiled face of Christ. We all, ALL from whom it hath pleased God to take away the veil, which is naturally upon all our hearts, behold as clearly and as plainly by the eye of faith, as we behold any object by the eye of sense. Those who do not behold all this glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, the veil remaineth upon their hearts unto this day. It is not for want of Christ the object, and the glory of God in and by him, being clearly set before them ; but through the spiritual blindness of man's understanding, and the veil which is naturally upon their hearts, that men do not see the unveiled face of Christ, and the glory of God shining in it. Hence we hear so many talk so incoherently, and inconsistently about divine truths, and so awfully detract from the glory of God in Christ, by denying the capital, fundamental doctrines of the gospel. O how awful is this declaration ! "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost. In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. For,

3dly, This beholding is in a glass. The gospel is this true mirror, or looking glass, wherein we behold the smiling countenance, yea, the loving heart of God himself in Christ, to sinners of mankind. Many are fond of looking in a glass, to admire themselves. But O, while sinners look in this glass, they gaze upon and admire the God of love. For here they behold his everlasting covenant love fully displayed, as so many striking features in his gracious countenance. You cannot look into this glass, but you must see, and be constrained to cry out, GOD IS LOVE. I here see his loving face. I here behold his loving heart. I believe, I know, I feel, that love is of God, and God is love : nothing but love to sinners in Christ. Here I clearly behold the goings forth of his heart in love to them, in his everlasting covenant from eternity for them. In

the glass of the gospel, we behold, God the Father loving, choosing, and blessing his people in Christ." Eph. i. 3. "Giving them to Christ." John xvii. 2. "Their oneness with Christ." Heb. ii. 11. "Christ giving himself for them." Tit. ii. 14. By whom the law was fulfilled, magnified, and made honourable, justice sanctified, God well pleased, and all the divine perfections illustriously displayed, and harmoniously exalted. And in consequence of all this, God the Holy Spirit, as engaged in covenant, is sent forth to glorify Christ in the eyes, and to the hearts of all the elect of the Father, and redeemed by the Son, to unite them to him, and sanctify them in him. All this covenant love before time, and covenant grace in time, we behold, clearly behold in the glass of the gospel. Speaking once of this, a person who denied the existence of the everlasting covenant, asked me this weak question, "Pray, sir, was you at the Council board! Poor thing! There was no necessity for that. For all the transactions of it are clearly and explicitly told us; by one who was at the Council: yea, one of the covenanting parties, even the Spirit of truth. "Whereof, concerning the things of the eternal covenant of grace, and peace, and sinners being sanctified in Christ, the Holy Ghost is a witness to us." Heb. x. 15. "The Spirit bears witness, because the Spirit is truth." 1 John v. 6. Therefore, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." 9th verse. And where does he witness, but in the gospel? Therefore,

2dly, It is beholding with wonder and admiration. There is no one point of doctrine in the gospel, but excites this. God's everlasting love to us, his election of us, redeeming, justifying, quickening, adopting, sanctifying, and saving us, in and by Christ, all create wonder in us: all are marvellous in our eyes, and astonishing to our hearts, so that at one time, we are ready to think the news too good to be true. At another, we cry out, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God. 1 John iii. 1. 2dly, It is a most delightful beholding. The LORD in covenant love proclaims of his people, collectively considered as the body of Christ. "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the LORD delighteth in thee." Isa. lxii. 4. Each of them by grace declares, "Thy law [thy scheme of salvation] is my delight." Psalm cxix. 174. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which hath made me free from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2, is my one glory: my chief delight. The gospel, Christ beheld in the gospel: the face of God, and the glory of God, shining in the glass of the gospel, are most engaging and delightful to the hearts of poor sinners.

Therefore, 3d. It is a continued beholding. It is not, we have beheld, or we shall behold, but it is beholding, a partici-

ple of the present time. We do now behold, we continue to behold, we go on beholding. Here, believing soul, see what now is, and what ever is to be your constant, your continued work, even beholding the unveiled glory, the open face of Jesus, in the glass of the gospel, and the love of God's heart to you a sinner in him. For, "whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, [the glass of the gospel] and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, [continually beholding the gospel, and Christ in the gospel] this man shall be blessed in his deed." James i. 25. How blessed? thus we come,

Secondly, to consider, "changed into the same image." How changed? From natural to spiritual men? No. These we are already, or we could not thus behold. Is flesh changed into spirit? No. We are still in the flesh, and fleshly lusts war against us. Are we so changed as to have no sin in us? No. Sin dwelleth in us, and wars against us. How then are we changed? "Into the same image." An image is the likeness, or representation of any person, or thing. God forbids us to "make to ourselves any graven image, to bow down to, or worship." Exod. xx. 4. For, after our fall, the imaginations and thoughts of our hearts are evil, only evil, continually evil." Gen. vi. 5. Therefore, as we have lost the image of God, we can make nothing but an evil image. And God from all eternity, decreed to set up an image in time, as the most striking likeness, and strongest representation of his glorious person. And though by the fall, we had entirely lost all sight and knowledge of God, yet we should clearly see, and comfortably know him again, in and by this image. This is none other than his beloved Son, "who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Heb. i. 3. Hence he tells Philip, "He who hath seen me, hath seen the Father also." John xiv. 9. Thus Christ is the image of God. The gospel is the image of Christ: and while we are beholding the gospel, and Christ in the gospel, the true image of God is stamped upon our mind, or heart, and we are more and more changed in our thoughts, judgments, and affections into this image.

You see, when the Galatians had fallen from grace, that is, had lost sight of the grace of God, salvation by that grace only, and justification by the righteousness of Christ fully; by not beholding the glory of God in the gospel, and had fallen into a corrupt notion of their own righteousness, and justification in part, by what they did, and submitted to for salvation; Paul tells them, "Christ would profit them nothing." For they had lost sight of the image of Christ, the image of God, the image of the gospel, and were, as the Psalmist speaks,

“walking in a vain shew,” or an *image*, as rendered in the margin. Psalm xxxix. 6. And therefore he tells them, “I travel in birth again, [like a woman in labour pains] until Christ be formed in you.” Gal. iv. 19. That is, till the image of Christ, and the image of the gospel, was pourtrayed, or restamped upon their hearts and minds. This is a point of the greatest importance, for the peace and comfort of our souls, and to the honour of the gospel, and the glory of God in Christ. O let us ever be most deeply concerned about it!

For such as the image is, which is impressed upon the mind, or heart, so will the life and walk be. If it is the image of Christ, or the gospel, it will produce correspondent fruits and effects upon the life. We shall strive to honour the gospel, and glorify Christ. But if a corrupt image is impressed there, we shall be like Israel of old; “An empty vine, we shall bring forth fruit unto ourselves, according to the goodly image [pleasing in our own eyes, but abominable image in the sight of God] which we have made.” Hos. x. 1. Our imaginations being only evil, we are naturally prone to create evil images in our minds, contrary to the image of the gospel. Hence so many corrupt doctrines are advanced, contrary to the grace of God, and the image of Christ. The mind of a miser is impressed with the image of gold. His affections are set upon it. The more he contemplates it, the more he receives the image of it upon his mind. A Pharisee’s mind is impressed with the image of his own righteousness. The more he beholds it, the more his mind is changed into the image of it. So he who believes in Christ, and looks on Christ as his righteousness, the more he beholds Christ and his righteousness, the more he is changed into the image of Christ, and his righteousness. So in general, while we are beholding the gospel, the glory of the Lord shining in all his covenant purposes, glorious decrees, holy doctrines, and precious promises in the face of Jesus Christ, we receive the impress of them, and are changed in heart, judgment, and affections, into their very image. And this

“From glory to glory.” From one degree of glory to another. The glory of the gospel, of Christ in the gospel, and of God in Christ, is more and more communicated to us, and we are more and more impressed with, and shine in all this glory, “even by the Lord the Spirit.” It is he who glorifies Christ in the gospel; gives us to see the glory of the gospel, and the glory of Christ in the gospel; and while we are beholding this, he makes us glorious in Christ, and changes us from glory to glory, till from experiencing the glory of his grace on earth, we are changed into the ultimate glory of heaven. O how glorious to be ever thus engaged in beholding! Naturalists observe, “that while the Halcyon bird is brooding on her eggs, and bringing

forth her young, there is usually fair weather. From hence good times are called "Halcyon days." Would we constantly experience these Halcyon days? the Lord grant that we may be ever brooding over the gospel: ever beholding the glory of the Lord in the gospel, so as to be changed into his image in heart and life, by the Lord the Spirit. Let us attend to one word of

CAUTION.

There are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; and his ministers into ministers of righteousness." 2 Cor. ii. 13, &c. But neither satan, nor his ministers, can transform themselves into the TRUTH; no, their tongues will ever discover their rooted malice against the truth, as it is in Jesus. Hence, as we are in continual danger from them, we ought to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, "lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so our MINDS should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. ii. 3. Remember every heresy begins in the mind. If we hear a perverted gospel, our minds are in danger of being corrupted. One says, I believe the doctrine of the atonement, and salvation of Christ, but I cannot bear the doctrines of his imputed righteousness, God's electing love, and the final perseverance of his people. I set my face against these. Why so? the latter are as clearly revealed as the former. What a mangled image do such make of the gospel? Dare they talk so of God's commandments, or precepts? Are not the doctrines of his love, equally precious as the other? O what daring arrogance is this! The Lord deliver us from it! Pride and unbelief are at the bottom of this.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, teach us humbly to receive all thy sacred truths, as revealed in thy word; that we may see the glory of thy grace and love displayed by them; and shining in the face of Jesus Christ, to our salvation by him. Blessed Spirit, enable us so to behold thy gospel, as to be changed into the perfect image of it in heart and affection, to the glory of the three one God. Amen.

The Fifteenth Lord's Day.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF SPIRITUAL HUNGER AND THIRST.

*Blessed are they who do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness :
for they shall be filled. Matt. v. 6.*

THUS spake the best preacher, in the best sermon that ever was preached on the earth. Near thirty years since, I knew one who was very intimate with a Clergyman, to whom he once took the liberty of speaking freely, of the necessity of the new birth of the Spirit, &c. The minister, who was a very serious, outwardly good man, expressed a great regard for this person ; told a friend of his, that he really feared he was going out of his mind. To prevent this dreadful evil, and to set him right, he advised this person to read a sermon which he would recommend, saying it was the best *moral* sermon in the world ; and he was sure he could have no objection to the preacher of it. What should this sermon be, but our blessed Lord's on the Mount. Lo, this he called a *moral* sermon ! God is gracious to sinners. Glory to him, he has given the spirit of a sound mind to that poor sinner, and he now sees spirituality from beginning to end of that sermon. And that Jesus, the high priest of our profession, who was sent to bless us poor sinners, is here pronouncing the spiritual blessings of the everlasting covenant of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, "as the high priest under the law did." Numb. vi. 24, &c. Oh how joyful is this !

Let us, therefore, consider, (1st.) What is implied in this hunger and thirst. (2d.) What righteousness is it after. (3d.) The blessedness of it. And may the Lord grant us to experience in power, what is here revealed in the letter. O that we may know, to our souls comfort and joy, that it is infinitely more blessed to hunger and thirst after righteousness, than to be dead in sin, gratifying our lusts, living in pleasure, full of confidence in our own righteousness, and satisfied in, and with ourselves.

First, What is implied in this hunger and thirst. These plain and strong images in nature, we all know by experience. For we have felt them. So conceive of them now, and you will have a just idea of what they mean in a spiritual sense. Nay, your soul cannot be alive to God, but you have felt them. Yea, you feel them now. For the soul has its senses, as well as the body. Spiritual hunger and thirst, are as natural to the soul, as to the body. Yes, and they will accompany you all your days too. For the holy Spirit keeps up the life of faith, the

conviction of sin, and this hunger and thirst. Our Lord says, "Woe unto you who are full, for ye have received your consolation." Luke vi. 25. Full of conceit of their own righteousness, and puffed up with a notion of their own holiness and perfection, so as not to feel hunger and thirst after Christ, and his righteousness to be imputed to them, as poor and needy sinners. Such have received their consolation, and a sad one it is. They are not to be envied, but pitied. For our Lord's woe is upon them; and we have seen woeful instances of such. But blessed are they who hunger and thirst. This implies,

1st. *Spiritual life.* For you feel this hunger and thirst. That would be a strange kind of hunger and thirst, that we did not feel! And, it would be equally as strange to say, that a dead man can feel hunger and thirst! Therefore, if you do feel it, even in the smallest degree, it is a sure sign that the Lord hath quickened you, and that you are alive to the Lord. Here a poor distressed sinner may say, O that I were sure of this! But I cannot think my soul is thus quickened, because I am so harassed with sin, so perplexed about my state, and so distressed with fear, that I do not know, nor love Christ as I ought. Therefore I do not hunger and thirst at all. Was this always your language? Is this the complaint of any who are dead in sin? Just as well suppose, that a man is dead, whom you hear crying out for drink and food.

2d. It is a painful sensation. Though we cannot form so strong a conception, or idea of thirst, as those who have felt it, to that intense degree, in the eastern countries, with a sultry sun directly over their heads, burning sands under their feet, and no water possibly to be got: or like those poor souls, who perished in the black hole in the East Indies, when they went raving mad with heat and thirst: though we cannot conceive so strongly of the pain of hunger, as those who have been drove to eat human, yea, even their own flesh; yet we have experienced so much of it, as to feel that it is a painful sensation in the stomach. So is spiritual hunger. It is a feeling, painful sensation in the soul, for want of spiritual food. But here we are apt to make sad work in our consciences. O says a poor, pained, hungry thirsty soul, surely if Christ loved me, or I had the least love to Christ, he would not leave me under such painful sensations of mind, and to feel such an aching void in my soul. Nay, but it is love itself that has caused these, that you might cry to him, come to him, not rest satisfied without him, and experience the blessedness of being filled out of his fulness. This hunger and thirst irritate the stomach, like a provocative bitter to quicken the appetite. Says David, "My soul thirsteth for God." Psalm xlii. 2. And our loving Lord says, "Ho, every one who thirsteth." Isai. iv. 5. "And if any man thirst, let him come unto ME." John vii. 37. Hence,

3d. It is a longing sensation. It cannot be satisfied without what is suited to allay its hunger, and quench its thirst. Offer a hungry, thirsty man, a rich dress, or a quantity of gold, this will only tantalize him : for these will neither satiate his hunger, nor quench his thirst. So this spiritual hunger and thirst cannot be allayed, without administering what is suitable to its nature. So when a soul with David says, "I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord." Psalm cxix. 174. Nothing else will satisfy it. Tell it of all the vanities of time, invite it to partake of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, the pleasing scenes of the play-house, the diversions of the card table, the joy and festivity of jovial companions, it cannot take up with any of them, it can be satisfied with none of them, it pours out contempt upon all of them : for this longing for salvation rises superior to them. It is the one thing needful, which the soul hath chosen, and it cannot, will not be satisfied without it. For,

4th. Knowledge ever accompanies this hunger and thirst. Such souls are not like children, who cry for they know not what, and are quieted with every gaudy bauble. No, they know what they hunger and thirst after, and nothing but that will satisfy them. But some cry out, O don't tell us of knowledge. Away with all head knowledge. Give us love, love. A most excellent desire, but a most foolish way of expecting it. For, is there any other way to the heart, and its affections, but by the understanding and judgment ? Therefore, is not this gaping after they know not what : a blind passion ? This is just as wise as to cry out, Give me, O give me, food and drink ; but away with all putting it into my head, and swallowing it ; but put it into my stomach at once. There let me enjoy it. Thus "Fools hate knowledge." Prov. i. 22. "But when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge." Prov. xxi. 11. "And it is pleasant to the soul." Prov. ii. 10. But who instructs the hungry and thirsty souls ? The Spirit of wisdom and revelation. He convinces of sin. He reveals a righteousness to them. Thus he creates this hunger and thirst in them. And they know that they hunger and thirst after righteousness. Therefore we come to consider,

Second, What righteousness it is after. There is but one righteousness revealed in scripture, by which sinners can possibly be made righteous, and in which alone they are fully, perfectly, and everlastingly justified before God. And this is the **ONE** righteousness of his beloved Son *only*, and no other. For, "by the righteousness of *one*, or the one righteousness of Jesus Christ, the *free gift* came upon all men to justification of life." Who are here meant by all men, the apostle explains in the next verse. "For if by one man's disobedience, many

were made sinners, even so, by the obedience of ONE, shall *many* be made righteous." Rome. v. 18, 19. Even ALL the elect people of God. ALL the redeemed of Christ. ALL who are sanctified by the Spirit, to believe on Christ, and be made righteous in him. The scriptures are full, express, and clear, upon this point, righteousness. And how sinners of mankind are made righteous, "Even by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them; and that they are made the righteousness of God IN HIM." 2 Cor. v. 21. So that one should think, no man could mistake in this point. But, alas! the legality of our natures, and the pride and unbelief of our hearts, work very strongly against this plain truth of God, this clear point of faith, to our great distress. And therefore our believing, new-born souls, are constantly hungering and thirsting after clearer knowledge, and more comfortable enjoyment of this precious righteousness, of our dear Saviour. But to supersede this, how many oppose this one righteousness of Christ, to establish their own righteousness; and awfully controvert God's wisdom, to exalt their own? Hence we hear of that old Popish heresy being revived, of two justifications, one by Christ, and the other by the merit of their works. I am sure the breasts of those who hunger and thirst after Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, will heave with indignation at such Christ-dishonouring pride. O my dear friends in Christ, whose righteousness have we to mention on earth, and before the God of Heaven, but our dear Lord's only? Whose obedience to the law of God can we glory of, and glory in, but his alone? Is our righteousness perfect? Is our obedience faultless? Are we sinless? If so, stand forth and challenge heaven, (as insolent pride speaks) for thy justification, and eternal life. But if not, humble thyself as a poor needy sinner, as thou art; and instead of disputing with the sons of pride, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, hunger and thirst more and more after Christ and his righteousness; yea, eat his flesh, and drink his blood, by faith with thanksgiving. For, ye who profess to be members of the church of England, hear this, her most true, and most joyful declaration, "Christ is now the righteousness of all them who truly believe in him." He for them paid their ransom by his death. He for them fulfilled the law in his life. So that now *in him*, and *by him*, every true Christian may be called a fulfiller of the law, forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacketh, Christ's righteousness hath supplied. *Homily on Salvation.*

But then, if every believer is thus perfectly righteous in Christ, why should he hunger and thirst after righteousness? Because he ever sees, knows, and feels, that he is an unrighteous sinner in himself, therefore, will ever confess with pious

bishop Beveridge, "I cannot pray but I sin. I cannot hear a sermon but I sin. I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them. My repentance need to be repented of. My tears want washing; and the washing of my tears, need still to be washed over again, in the blood of my Redeemer. Thus not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, bespeak me a child of Adam." Now those who do not see, and cannot confess thus from the feeling of their heart, cannot hunger and thirst after Christ's righteousness. For they are full of their own, are satisfied with it, and loathe the honey-comb of full, free, and everlasting justification, by the righteousness of Christ *only*.

But those who do see, and feel this, will be hungering and thirsting every day after it. Paul was such a hungry, thirsty soul all his days. Hence we hear him crying, "That I may know Christ, that I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness. I follow after to apprehend Christ, [to catch faster hold of him, cleave more to him, enjoy more of him, and find more blessedness in him] "who hath apprehended me." Phil. iii. 9, &c. But say some, "You so trust in, and rely upon the righteousness of Christ, that you are content without a righteousness of your own. Really we do not understand this phrase, our own righteousness. What do you mean by it? Righteousness means, a perfect conformity to, and perfect fulfilment of, the holy law of God, in thought, word, and deed. Dare you say you have done this? If so, you have a righteousness of your own. If not you have not a righteousness of your own. We dare not say, we have done this. Therefore confess ourselves unrighteous sinners. But you say, then we make Christ's righteousness a cloak for our unrighteousness. Indeed we do. We own the charge. Yea, we bless our gracious God for such a glorious robe of righteousness; such a precious cloak to cover the shame of our nakedness, and for us to appear in, before him. For we hear the Spirit of truth declare, "Blessed is the man, whose transgression is forgiven, [in the blood of Christ] and whose sin is covered," [by the righteousness of Christ] Psalm xxxii. 1. And thus the poet scripturally introduces God the Father, addressing his beloved Son:

———"Thy merit

"Imputed, shall absolve them who renounce

"Their own both righteous, and unrighteous deeds,

"And live in thee transplanted, and from thee

"Receive new life."

Milton.

O say some, "This is cursed Antinomianism." If so, Paul was such an Antinomian. "For he counted all things but

loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and to be found in his righteousness." Phil. iii. Therefore this hard name does not effect us. It will neither break our bones, nor disturb our peace, while we hear ourselves pronounced blessed by our Lord. And blessed be his dear name, we can prove our blessedness by his word, and feel it in our own experience. For says our Lord, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness." The blessedness of which, let us,

Thirdly, Meditate upon. There is certainly a blessedness, in not mistaking the object from whom blessedness alone can be obtained. And if looking to, hungering and thirsting after this object, who alone can bless us, be blessedness, then we are blessed. For in, and from him, we experience all blessedness. His righteousness hath obtained all to us, and in the faith of his righteousness we enjoy all in us. What! without any inherent righteousness of your own? I suppose you mean, the graces of the Spirit: the fruits of the Spirit: the fruits of righteousness, fruit unto holiness, &c. If so, we earnestly contend for them, hunger and thirst after them, pray to be filled with them: and say, for ever silenced be that tongue which dare deny them. "For though the body is dead, because of sin, yet the spirit is life, because of righteousness." Rom. viii. 10. This we feel, because Christ hath wrought out, and brought into the court of heaven, a righteousness which magnifies God's law, satisfies his justice, and with which God is well pleased; therefore his Spirit hath made our souls alive to God, through Jesus Christ. Hence from a new and spiritual life, we experience the blessedness of hungering and thirsting, for communications from Christ, of the graces and fruits of his Spirit; the fruits of righteousness, and to abound herein, "That we may have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Rom. vi. 22.

But still these are not our righteousness: we dare not glory in these, but only in Christ, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jer. xxiii. 6. Nay, we dare not blend these with him; nor suppose that we are made righteous by these, or that these are any part of our justifying righteousness before God. No. Let us ever be very careful to distinguish here, so as not to confound these together, to the confusion of our mind, and perplexity of our conscience. For our faith is one thing, and our experience another. Christ, in all his offices, and relations, in his works of atonement, righteousness, and salvation, and God in him, as taught by the Spirit in the word, are the supreme, the only objects of our faith. Our souls can trust in nothing, nor rest upon any thing, besides these, to give us the least hope. What is experience? The proof or trial of any

thing, whereby we come to the knowledge of its cause and effects. So by believing the gospel, or trusting in Christ for righteousness and salvation, we arrive at inward proof and experience, that the "God of hope fills our minds with all joy and peace in believing, and makes us abound in hope [on Christ] through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. "Hence we have the fruit of the Spirit in us." Gal. v. 22. And we bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ. To what end? To make us righteous before God, justify us in his sight? No, that is fully, perfectly, and for ever done already. "For Christ of God is made righteousness to us." 1 Cor. i. 30. "And we are made the righteousness of God in Christ." 2 Cor. v. 21. "Therefore, our fruits of righteousness are, by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God." Phil. i. 11. Hence, because God hath transplanted us out of nature's barren soil, into Christ our living head, and made us righteous in him, that we might live in him, glory of him, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness by him, to the praise and glory of God: is this to destroy holiness of life? Strange! that ever such an absurd notion should enter the head of any rational being! As well say, because a man plants a vineyard, cultivates and dresses it, in order to make it fruitful, that therefore he is an enemy to the production of grapes. Or because a man marries, and begets children, that he is an enemy to procreation. No: Paul says, "We are married to Christ, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Rom. vii. 4. This we hunger and thirst after, that we may live more upon him, walk more comfortably in him, and bring forth more fruits of righteousness by him. And our dear Lord says, such are blessed: blessed of God the Father, blessed in God the Son, and blessed with God the Holy Ghost. O my poor fellow sinners, what blessedness is this!

"They shall be filled." What! so filled as to hunger and thirst no more after Christ and his righteousness? No verily. But so satisfied with him in their hearts and consciences, as to hunger and thirst after no other righteousness, to justify, and make them righteous before God, but his beloved Son's *only*. And after the enjoyment of all the precious blessings, and glorious privileges obtained by this righteousness, verily they will hunger and thirst all their days on earth, to receive all out of the fulness which is in Christ, till they are filled with all the fulness of God in heaven. Therefore, carefully distinguish here between the "RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH," Rom. iv. 13, "and the obedience of faith." Rom. xvi. 26. "The righteousness of Christ, and our obedience unto righteousness." Rom. xvi. 16. For without this, you cannot go on steadily, comfortably, nor joyfully in the ways of God. "For how can

two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos iii. 3. God's will and yours must agree, in this point of righteousness and justification, or you cannot walk together in peace and love. "For he filleth the hungry, [the self-emptied sinner] with good things, [out of the treasury of his covenant love, and out of the fulness of his beloved Son] but the rich [the self-righteous, self-confident, self-exalting sinner] he sends empty away." Luke v. 3. Having thus considered this scriptural, and important point, may the Lord settle it in our consciences, and establish us in the experience of it. Let us aim to make an

IMPROVEMENT.

1st. Hence see the true nature of faith. It receives the truths of God, and creates a hunger and thirst in the soul, after the enjoyment of the blessings contained in them. Though the mind and conscience of a sinner, be satisfied with the hope of eternal life, flowing wholly and solely from the righteousness and salvation of the Son of God; yet this does not abate his hunger and thirst after Christ. No. For as faith discovers in the world, more and more of the loveliness, charms, glory, and preciousness of Jesus, so this keeps up a hunger and thirst in the soul after him, to enjoy more of him, to live more upon him, to delight more in him, to be devoted more to him, so as to find him all in all, in the heart and affections; and to be dead to this life, and all its vanities, the world with all its trifles, self-righteous pride, and all its follies. Thus faith manifests itself to be of God. For it obeys God, by beholding, and being delighted with God's beloved Son, in whom He declares, "My soul delighteth." Isa. xlii. 1. "A certain heathen making an oration, as he was sacrificing to his god, in the midst of his devotion, word was brought him, that his only son was dead. He was nothing moved at it, but went on with his work, and said, I knew I did not get him to live for ever." Thus faith, when intensely fixed upon Christ, will put all aside for him. For the soul enjoys him now, and expects soon to be with him in glory.

2dly. This faith, and these hungerings and thirstings after Christ, are graces of, and spring from the everlasting covenant of grace. According to covenant engagement, Christ's soul hungered and thirsted to redeem and save all that the Father had given to him. Precious Saviour! He said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Luke xii. 50. Glory to thee, O Lord God, that thou hast accomplished it. And if we hunger and thirst after this salvation, it is an evidence of our interest in it. For the Spirit of Jesus created this hunger and thirst after it, and he glorifies Christ by it, in filling our souls out of his inex-

haustible fulness. Therefore he says, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Song v. 1.

A COLLECT.

O LORD Jesus Christ, who art the righteousness and salvation of lost sinners, cause our souls ever to hunger and thirst after thee. O be thou the bread of life, and the waters of salvation to us. Grant us so to eat thy flesh, and drink thy blood, that we may live by thee, and be nourished up to eternal life. In the return of each day, and every sabbath, may we find more longings after thee, and stronger appetites to feed on thee. O that we may be more dead to the world, and the things of it, while we live in it, that we may live more to thy honour and glory, O LAMB of God. Amen.

The Sixteenth Lord's Day.

ON GRIEVING AND QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

—*Walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.* Acts ix. 31.

Grieve not the holy spirit of God. Eph. iv. 20.

Quench not the spirit. 1 Thess. v. 19.

As reason is common to all men, so is the Spirit of God to all believers. Sir Isaac Newton was a person of an eminent character for the finest parts, most exalted ideas, noblest sentiments, and most nervous reasoning. Though very few attain to such heights of knowledge as he did, yet all other men partake of reason in common with him. Suppose any person had took it in his head to deny that any man is possessed of reason, and had told Sir Isaac, "Sir you are most amazingly deceived and deluded, for neither you, nor any one man upon earth, have one single grain of reason, any more than a beast. Your judgment is deceived. You do not at all act under the influence of reason." What should we think of such a person? Would there not be all the reason in the world to conclude, that he was bereft of reason? This is just the very case in spiritual things. For equally as absurd do men act, in denying that believers in Christ do partake of the Spirit of Christ. For, did the world believe that the greatest character that ever appeared on the stage of life: a character as infinitely superior to that of Sir Isaac Newton, as his was to the meanest worm: yea, as much superior to him, as the Son of the most high God is to the lowest and meanest of all the sons of men: I say, did the world believe that Christ possessed the Spirit of God, acted under the influence of that Spirit, and lived a spiritual life? No, verily. So far from it, that they said he was mad, had a devil, and by the power of the devil, wrought his miracles. This was their blasphemy: "The unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost." Matt. xii. 3. By which they plainly manifested, that they were destitute of his grace, and that all their wisdom was earthly, sensual, and devilish, "They having not the Spirit." Jude xix.

Are there any of this earthly, sensual, devilish seed now upon the earth? Yes, their name is legion, for they are many. Their nature is just the same; and they speak the very same language as their forefathers did. They no more believe that Christ's members partake of his Spirit, than their ancestors did, that Christ our head was filled with the Spirit. The reason is plainly assigned, when the apostle calls on us with admiration

and adoration, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." He adds, therefore, [or for this very reason, because we are sons of God, and consequently partakers of the Spirit of God, from our elder brother, the Son of God] "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." 1 John iii. 1. They knew not what to think of Christ. They did not at all approve of his life and conduct. And they will act the very same by us, if we are partakers of Christ's Spirit, live and walk in the Spirit, and do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. We must appear very strange, odd beings to them.

But, the highest effrontery of all is, they would persuade us out of our reason, and tell us our senses deceive us, and our feelings delude us, when we talk of "walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, of being led by the Spirit, and that the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, &c. This, though the sober language of God's word, is the sport and ridicule of the devil's children. All who use it, are sure to be deemed madmen, enthusiasts, fanatics, methodists, &c. Thus it is. And thus, from the nature of things, it must and will be. For every tree discovers its nature by its fruits. Thus the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil, by the spirit they are of, by the life they live, and the words they speak. And I am bold to say, little as it may be thought of in the world, that deriding and despising the children of God, for professing to have received the Spirit of God in his quickening power, regenerating grace, sanctifying and comforting influences, not only discovers an enmity against God, persecution against Christ, opposition to the scriptures of truth, but it also borders very nearly upon the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. But we must leave such to their awful state, with this solemn word from our Lord, "He who despiseth you, [as members of me] despiseth me, your living head." Luke x. 16. And this from his inspired apostle, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, who also hath given unto us his holy Spirit." 1 Thess. iv. 8. But,

To our unspeakable comfort, this is an infallible truth, that God hath given unto us all, who believe in Christ, his holy Spirit. "For, whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of the Spirit of God." 1 John v. 1. And every one who is born of the Spirit, doth believe that the Son of God is the anointed Saviour, and therefore belongs to Christ, and is a partaker of the Spirit of Christ. For, no man can say [from the belief of the truth in his heart] "That Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. xii. 3. "And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. viii. 9. This matter being express, clear, and plain, that believers in Christ

do belong to Christ, and are partakers of the Spirit of Christ, and call him Lord by the Holy Ghost. Let us consider, and O that we may consider, under the teaching, enlightening, comforting, and sanctifying influence of the Spirit of truth!

1st. What is implied by walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

2dly. What it is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

3dly. What it is to quench the Spirit.

First, What is implied by walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost? I think (and hope the thought is not contrary to truth) that as we are taught to conceive, of "Names being written in the slain Lamb's book of Life, from the foundation of the world." Revel. xiii. 18. That as the Holy Ghost is the witness, sealer, and testifier of the covenant of grace and life; that as he is called the "finger of God, by whom Moses wrought his miracles." Exod. viii. 19. "The finger of God, who wrote the law in the two tables of stone." xxxi. 18. "The finger of God, by which our Saviour says, he cast out devils." Luke xi. 20. "And the Spirit of God, who writes the law of grace and truth upon the fleshly tables of our hearts." 2 Cor. iii. 3. That therefore it was his peculiar covenant office to write in the Lamb's book of life, the names of all the beloved objects of God the Father's choice, the happy subjects whom Christ undertook to redeem, justify, and save in time. And that therefore he was to be the COMFORTER of them, and cause them to walk in his comforts, which he bestows upon them, through believing the work and salvation of the Son of God. O it is so sweet, comforting, and establishing, to have clear views of the covenant of grace and salvation; and distinct views of the offices, which the sacred THREE sustain in that covenant, and how precisely all are fulfilled to the glory of the whole Godhead, and to the comfort of all the elect people of God! This is the greatest blessing on earth, next to enjoying the sensible comforts of it in our hearts. Hence we plainly see, the true meaning of our Lord's words, "The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself.—He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xiii. 14.

It is thus the Holy Ghost comforts the believing members of Christ. Not by speaking of himself as the Saviour, or that what he does in us justifies us, but by leading our hearts to Jesus, persuading us to believe on him, and enabling us to cleave to him, assuring us, there is all righteousness and salvation in him only; that we are interested in him, and bearing interest with our spirits, (sinners as we are in ourselves) that we are the children of God, by the faith of him. For as the Holy Ghost wrote our names in the LAMB's book of

life, so he writes the LAMB's love upon our hearts, "And sheds the love of God the Father abroad in our hearts." Rom. v. 5. Thus the knowledge of our justification by faith, the sense of our having peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the comfort of God's love in our hearts, the assurance of the pardon of our sins, the boldness of access we have to God by faith, the rejoicing we have in hope of the glory of God; and though we know and feel that we are sinners in the sight of God, yet this hope in Christ makes us not ashamed and confounded before God, as those who are destitute of the comfort of hope: all this believing in Christ flows from the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

In order to comfort us, the Holy Ghost shall glorify *ME*, says Christ. The Spirit of truth doth not glorify himself as the Saviour, but Christ alone. He doth not glorify us, nor make us appear glorious in our own eyes, as repenting, believing, loving, hoping, obedient, good and righteous beings. No. He convinces us of sin: makes us know and feel, that we are in ourselves nothing but sin. He turns us from ourselves to Christ. He turns our views from ourselves to Christ, and he takes of the things of Christ, his one atonement for sin, his one obedience unto death, for righteousness and justification, his finished redemption for salvation, his resurrection, as our discharge from all condemnation, and his intercession, as ever prevailing in heaven, for full and final, sure and certain salvation. He shews these things of Christ to us, in such a clear, convincing, attracting and engaging view, as causes our affections to receive them, embrace them, be delighted with them, so as to hope only in them, trust solely on, and rejoice wholly in them. Thus he pacifies our consciences, and comforts our hearts, in our sensible union to Christ, comfortable communion with him, and with the love of the Father in him; assuring our hearts that all which Christ has, and is, are ours. And in this faith he causes us to live and walk. In this way, and in no other, does the Holy Ghost comfort the believing members of Christ. All his comforts are enjoyed, in the faith of the Son of God.

Now do you know and experience, any thing of this comfort in your heart? You can tell whether you know and feel yourself to be a miserable sinner: you know what you look to for relief of conscience, support of mind, and peace of soul? Is it to Christ and his work alone? This is from the Spirit of truth. As sure as you live and walk, in the obedience of this faith, you shall partake of the comforts of the Holy Ghost, as surely as these first disciples did. But pray mind. It is said of them, "Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost." These are inseparable. Where the filial, loving,

obedient fear of God is not in the heart, influencing the life, let men's pretensions to the comforts of the Spirit be ever so great, and their profession of enjoying them ever so strong, (for confidence here proves nothing) they may be fully assured, they only deceive and delude their own souls. For such is the glorious system of the gospel of salvation, and hereby it manifests itself, to be a plan of a Holy God, that if holiness is not loved, God feared, and sin hated, the comforts of the Holy Ghost cannot possibly be enjoyed. These the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, effecteth upon every believing heart, and these he maintains in every comforted soul. Therefore, we are exhorted,

Secondly, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Though we are walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, we should ever consider ourselves liable to be in danger, and therefore fear to do it. But what is it to grieve the Holy Spirit? Pause here, O soul, admire and adore the amazing, condescending love of God the Spirit, to express himself as though he was really affected by, and grieved for any conduct of ours. But he loves us with the very same, everlasting, covenant love, equally with God the Father, and God the Son. O let us ever give equal honour, adoration, and glory to him. And as we fear to offend God the Father, dishonour Christ the Son, so let us fear to grieve God the Holy Ghost. There are many ways in which we are liable to do this.

1st. We are ever to remember, that the comforts of the Holy Ghost are neither given to gratify the pride, nor indulge the lusts of our corrupt nature: but that they are contrary to both. They are not given for any thing done by nature, but are out of and above nature: and therefore, for any believer to indulge, either in pride, or the gratification of the lusts of his flesh, is to grieve the Spirit. An attention to both these will furnish us with just ideas of what it is to grieve the Holy Spirit. Of this we are to conceive, that the Spirit is displeased with our conduct, and therefore will withhold his comforts from us: and this not in wrath against us, but in love to us. For the most affectionate parent may be grieved at the conduct of his offspring, withhold the tokens of his love, and wear the frown of displeasure on his countenance, while there is the strongest love in his heart to him, and the tenderest regard for the welfare of him. Whatever steals away the heart from Jesus, grieves the Holy Spirit, who is the witness to, and glorifier of him. But heart pride, and corrupt lusts do this, therefore they grieve the Holy Spirit.

As to pride of heart: spiritual pride, this consists in thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. "This is directly contrary to the teaching of the Spirit." Rom. xii. 3.

This enters even into our very thoughts and imaginations. We can as much form an idea in our imagination, as a workman can cast an image of any metal in a mould. It is the grand office of the Spirit, constantly to convince us of sin, and of righteousness, to shew us, that in ourselves we are nothing but sin, and destitute of righteousness, and to comfort us, by the one atonement, and one righteousness of the Son of God in our nature. But if through thinking highly of ourselves, that we are righteous in ourselves, we turn to our obedience, trust to our works, and expect in any wise, in whole, or in part, to fulfil the law, to recommend ourselves to the favour of God, to justify us before him, and entitle ourselves to his kingdom, we displease God, dishonour Christ, and grieve the Spirit.

But you may say, No believer in Christ will ever act thus. Happy for us if we did not. He who sees the least danger of this, is in most danger from it. This legal, self-righteous, high-thinking Spirit, lives in our natures, and cleaves as close to us, as our flesh to our bones. Pride of heart is ever attended by independency of spirit. It works by various ways, and deceives us ere we are aware. Else, why so many cautions to believers against it? Why so many exhortations to humility? Why is the whole spirit of the gospel, so levelled against it? Why was the meek Lamb of God so very bitter against the pharisees, whose grand character was, "TRUSTING IN THEMSELVES, THAT THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS?" Luke xviii. Why all this? but because a high opinion of ourselves, of our own will, power, and works, displeases God, and grieves his Spirit.

For, where any thing of this kind is indulged in the heart, and cleaved to by our spirit, it works in direct opposition to the truth of the gospel, and the grace of the Saviour. Purge out, therefore, the old leaven. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, for the pride of your heart, the self-righteousness of your spirit, and your high thoughts of yourselves. "Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to you the measure of faith." Rom. xii. 3. Which rejoices in Christ Jesus only, and rejects all confidence in the flesh. High thoughts are contrary to sober thinking. They intoxicate the mind, like strong liquors, so that a man is not himself, nor knows what he does. Entertaining high thoughts of ourselves; indulging low thoughts of Christ, of his person as God-man, of his righteousness, atonement, and salvation, is contrary to the Spirit's testimony in the word, and his comforts in the heart. Turning to any kind of self-confidence, will grieve him, and cause him to depart. O how ought we to pray him continually, to keep us humble and low, in our right mind, at the Saviour's feet! If we prize the comforts of the Holy Ghost, we shall do this. O believer, you who have known and felt your own vileness, po-

verty, and wretchedness, consider, cherishing and indulging a spark of spiritual pride and self-righteousness in you, is more inexcusable than a flame of pride in those who know not the preciousness of Christ, in his righteousness and salvation. Mr. Fox, the martyrologist, used to say, that his gifts hurt him more than his sins. For many times he was proud of them, but humbled on account of his base sins, and manifold impurities.

2dly. Indulging carnal lusts, and sensual gratifications, will grieve the Spirit. These are contrary to the enjoyment of the love of Christ, happiness in Christ, and the honour of Christ in the world. Pride steals the heart from Christ. These debauch the heart, to the scandal of the cause of Christ. May it not justly be said to, and of such? *You* a believer in Christ, a son of God, and a partaker of the comforts of the Spirit of Christ, and profess that all your comfort, joy, and happiness, centre in these; and yet for *you* to sink yourself so low, to eat husks with the swine, to cast in your lot with the ungodly, to seek and find joy and pleasure in their carnal delights, and sensual gratifications, is amazingly absurd! Verily your conduct gives the lie to your profession, of seeking all, and enjoying all in Christ. The contrary is evident. You find not enough in him to satiate your soul, and therefore you seek it in other objects. You prefer the pleasure of the flesh, to Christ, the enjoyment of them, to his love: fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, to fellowship with Christ, and the Father in him; and therefore must grieve the Spirit, and cause him to withdraw his comforts from your soul. So also, to slight the gospel, neglect the means of grace, and ordinances of Christ, not to keep holy the Sabbath, yea, allowedly living in anything which is contrary to the word of truth, the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and to living and walking in the Spirit, will surely grieve the Spirit, cause him to depart from us, and withdraw his comforts from our souls.

3dly. Can we enjoy no communion with God, no peace from God, no joy in God, but through Christ? Is the Spirit the glorifier of him? Does he testify of him in the word of truth? Does he bear witness to him, and of our interest in his love and salvation, in our hearts? Can we have no comfort from Christ, no communion with Christ, no rejoicing in Christ, without the fellowship of the holy Ghost? O consider then, how awfully distressing it must prove to our souls, wilfully, and avowedly, to grieve the holy Spirit. He is never sent away grieved from our hearts, but he leaves a hell of distress in our consciences. How many woefully experience this? A grieved Spirit, makes a grieved Christian. Can we have no delight in duties, no joy in ordinances, no pleasure in Sabbaths, no fer-

veny in prayer, no devotion of heart to God, no walking in love, no looking forward in hopes, no power over sin, no victory over satan, no triumph in death, no prospect of heaven, no assurance of interest there, and of being eternally there, but by the Holy Ghost? O how jealous ought we to be over ourselves, how watchful, careful, and fearful, lest we grieve this heavenly guest and cause him to withdraw his comforting presence from our souls. O let us ever remember these awful words, spoken of God's people of old, and hear and fear. "They rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, [he appeared so in his conduct towards them] and he fought against them." Isa. lxiii. 10. Let us now,

Thirdly, Consider, what is implied in quenching the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit, neither in yourself, by forbearing to hear the gospel preached, nor in others who preach it. So St. Chrysostom understands the words. Taking an example from a lamp, which burned by him, while preaching, says he, "You may quench this lamp by putting in water, or by taking out the oil." Real fire is ever accompanied with light and heat. These are Images of the grace of the Spirit in our hearts. Therefore these are liable to be quenched, to our great distress of soul. The light of faith may be darkened, the fire of love quenched, and the heat of zeal damped; just as the light and heat of a strong fire may be quenched, either by withholding fuel, or casting water upon it.

1st. We may quench the fire, light, and heat of the Spirit, by withholding fuel: that is, by neglecting the use of those means, which he has appointed for us, to the use of which he hath bound us, and to the practice of which he constantly exhorts by his word. Therefore, he who neglects the means of grace, will quench the fire, light, and heat of the Spirit of grace, in his own heart and experience. It cannot be otherwise. For though the Spirit of all grace, is not confined to any means; yet in his infinite wisdom, he hath bound us by the bands of love, to the use of all means. The very questioning this, is to quench the Spirit. The neglect of this, will assuredly cause the light of faith to burn dim, so that we shall not clearly, nor comfortably see Christ, in his love to us, and salvation of us. The fire of love, even the sense of Christ's love to us, and of our love to him, will grow cold, like dying embers. And the heat of our zeal for his glory, for his precious truths, and holy ways will abate, and grow languid, as effectually as withholding oil from a lamp, or coals from a fire, will cause it to go out.

So then, believers may so quench the Spirit, as totally to extinguish all his love to us, and for us? No. No more than they can extinguish his being as God. But this is quite foreign

to the point now considering. It is not quenching the love of the Spirit to us, but the sense of his love, and enjoyment of his comforts in us. For he says, to all and each of his chosen people in Christ, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee to Christ for everlasting life. Jerem. xxxi. 3. He is the LORD Jehovah who changes not: no more in his love, than in his being. He may change in his conduct to us, but never in his love of us. He may, from being a comforter in us, leave us to all the hell of our nature, the guilt of sin, and wrath of our conscience as sinners. This is awful and dreadful. Instances of it are common. This is enough to make us fear to quench the light of his grace, the fire of his love, and the warmth of his zeal in us. For it may make us question, whether he ever began to work upon us. But as Christ was engaged in covenant grace, to redeem, justify, and save all the beloved objects of eternal choice: so the LORD the Spirit, is equally engaged to lead and guide, sanctify and keep them by his almighty power, through faith unto eternal salvation. Though through their folly, they may be dark and uncomfortable in the way, yet salvation is sure in the end. For, as Mr. Bunyan beautifully remarks, he stands behind the wall, and pours oil into the fire of grace in the heart, so that it shall never be totally extinguished. Though invisible to us, the Spirit effects his saving work in us. But, who can know he is of this happy number, but by the light and comfort of the Spirit? For a proper idea of this quenching, turn to Heb. xi. 34. where it is said, "By faith they quenched the violence of fire." They could not change the nature of that element. They did not extinguish its flames, for they were burnt to death by them. But they quenched the dread and terror of them in them. Just so believers, who partake of the light, heat, and comfort of the Spirit. Though they cannot change the nature of God the Spirit which is LOVE, nor extinguish the flames of everlasting love in him, yet they may the sense and comfort of his love in themselves, through neglecting those duties enjoined them, therefore be fearful of this, and watchful against this. The Spirit's truth must be obeyed, that his comforts may be enjoyed.

2dly. Quench not the Spirit by pouring water on his influences. Water is naturally of a cold and quenching nature. So it acts upon fire, as an element directly opposite to it: so the love of the world, conformity to it, and walking after the course of it, is as contrary to the fire of heavenly love in the heart. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. The sense of God's love is extinguished in his heart. I have often thought, it is our great mercy and unspeakable blessedness, that the apostle doth not say, God the

Father hath no love in him to, or care for them who have the least love to the world; if he had, woe be unto the best and most perfect of us all: but the sense of God's love is not in such. It is the sense of his love, which creates heaven in the soul.

O this is hell upon earth, not to enjoy the heaven of God's love in us! for if earth will damp a flame and quench material fire, so will earthly affections damp the flame, and quench the heavenly fire of light and love in the heart. Therefore, when the apostle says, quench not the Spirit, what does he mean? but that we should as studiously avoid every thing that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, as we would running our heads into a thorn-bush to the danger of loosing our eyes, and depriving us of the comforts of life. For what is natural life without sight, health, and comfort? What is spiritual life without the light of truth, the comfort of love, and joy in the Holy Ghost? O then ever so highly prize these, as to fear to do any thing which may quench them!

A COLLECT.

O LORD the Spirit, the sanctifier and comforter of all the elect people of God, look down in mercy upon us, and sanctify us by the faith of Christ, and comfort us with the love of God in Christ, that we may walk in the comforts of thee, O Holy Ghost. Lord, our natures are proud and sinful, and we are prone to grieve thee by the pride of our hearts, the lusts of our flesh, and the unbelief of our spirits. O subdue them all by the power of thy grace, and bring our very thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Suffer us not to neglect the means of grace, nor slight thy precious comforts, so as to quench thy love, peace, and joy in our hearts; but keep us near to God, happy in Christ, and joyful in thy comforts, now and for ever, for Christ's sake. Amen.

The Seventeenth Lord's Day.

ON USING THE LAW UNLAWFULLY.

We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully ; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man. 1 Tim. i. 8, 9.

WE are in continual danger of being deceived, on the right hand, and the left, by corrupt nations and false teachers. Our danger is heightened by the inbred foe, our own heart, which is deceitful above all things, and is ever ready to catch the falling spark from satan's fire, so as to be deluded by every spreading error, and deceived by every specious pretence. Therefore the word so frequently abounds with these admonitions, Take heed to yourselves—beware,—be not deceived—many false prophets shall arise—try the spirits, &c. O may a sight and sense of our danger, excite us to cry continually to Christ our prophet, Lord teach us. Lord keep us.

For we here see how it was at the beginning. "Some had swerved from the end of the commandment, which is love, [love for the truth], to Christ who is the truth, and to all who are of the truth] out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, and had turned aside to vain jangling." What is that? To be like an instrument out of tune: to give an uncertain sound. They wrangled about the truths of the gospel, turned aside from the doctrine of God's everlasting love, and his election of grace, lest it should give offence: from the doctrine of sinners being made righteous, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, unto justification of life, lest it should make them content, without (what they call, but which has no existence but in their own fancy) a righteousness of their own. And they turned aside from the doctrine of the Spirit's efficacious grace, and unfrustrateble power, to the final perseverance and eternal salvation of all the elect, redeemed of the Lord, lest it can make men quiet in their sins, and secure in carnal presumption. Thus these men affected to be wiser and holier than the Spirit of truth, who has plainly revealed these fundamental points in the word of grace, for God's glory, and his people's establishment in truth, love, peace, and holiness. O miserable turning aside! most egregious folly, under a great shew of prodigious wisdom!

But what did they turn aside to? Verily, their own folly: to the law of works, from the gospel of grace. "Professing themselves wise, they became fools, desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, or whereof

they affirm." They held forth neither law nor gospel, but a mixed medley of both, compounded with heathen morality. So that God's law was not honoured, nor his gospel glorified. But they observed the purity and spirituality of the law, and eclipsed the glorious light of the gospel. Babel was in their heads, and confusion in their language. Were there such turn-aside teachers and professors in the beginning? O how do they swarm and abound in the present day!

But Christian, one word to you by the way. Did you never in a dark day, in a cold, dry, barren frame of soul, so swerve from Christ's love, a pure heart to him, a good conscience by him, and faith unfeigned in him, so as to turn aside to listen to the law, and think by your obedience you must get some righteousness of your own, to give you a good opinion of yourself, recommend you to God's favour, and entitle you to the love and salvation of Christ? This transition is very easy and very natural to our old legal hearts. I know it by experience. But verily, this is turning aside to vain jangling. Our hearts are out of tune. Our souls bewildered, and our speech confused. O how base, thus to turn aside from our living, loving bridegroom, to embrace a dead husband, the law, who never gave us a good look nor a kind word. But yet says St. Paul, "We know that the law is good, if a man (one who is married to Christ) use it lawfully. As contraries serve best to illustrate each other, let us consider,

First, What it is to use the law unlawfully.

Secondly, What it is to use it lawfully. May Christ our divine surety, and blessed law fulfiller, preserve us from turning aside from him, and the truth as it is in him, either to the right hand of licentiousness, or the left hand of legality, while we attend to these points. The first in the present meditation, and the second in the next.

First, What it is to use the law unlawfully? The ceremonial law, was a schoolmaster until Christ came, Gal. iii. 24. By its types and shadows, it taught and represented him who was to come. But Christ, the substance, being come, the shadows are fled away, that law being fully accomplished in Christ, is entirely abolished. But the moral law, here treated of, is of perpetual force, endless duration, and constant use, even to you, O believer; and it highly concerns you, to consider the use of the law, and to beware, lest you use it unlawfully. For much of your comfort and peace depends on one; and much of your distress and misery on the other. Consider, then, what was the law given for? Whereto serveth it? "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made." Gal. iii. 19. This seed is Christ. He is come, and has perfectly fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law

in his holy life, and put away transgressions by his sin-atonement death, and therefore the promise is sure to all his seed: even "the promise of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Titus i. 2. Promised before the world began! Who could this promise be made to? It could not possibly be to any one but Christ, who was set up from everlasting, to be the covenant head, surety, representative, and law-fulfiller for all his people. Therefore, if you believe on Christ in your heart, it is "unto righteousness." Rom. x. 10. You are a righteous man. The law was not made for you, to curse, condemn, and bind you over to wrath. For you are an heir of promise, and have fled from the law to Christ, to lay hold of him, who is the hope of the gospel. Therefore, "nothing but strong consolation from the immutable counsel, precious promise, and sacred oath of God awaits you." Heb. vi. 18. O that we may see this clearly, enjoy it comfortably, and not use the law unlawfully! But what is it, precisely to use this good law unlawfully? It is to pervert the very end and design of the good God who gave it, through the pride of our nature, the unbelief of our hearts, and the self-righteousness of our spirits, to the dishonour of Christ, and the distress of our consciences. This is done.

1st. When we use the law, or turn to it, as a covenant of works between God and us. This is natural to us all, because of the infection of nature, which remains in us, and it works very deceitfully upon us. Therefore, we are prone to think, surely God must be bound to us, and we bound to God, by some legal works of obedience, which we are to perform, to conciliate his favour, keep us in his grace, and render ourselves acceptable in his sight, if not in whole, yet in some measure, or else, we are left to lawless liberty, and licentious practices. We must therefore succeed, stand or fall; be justified, or condemned by God according to our obedience or disobedience against his law. Now so far as we incline to this in our hearts, we set aside the glory, wisdom, justice, truth, and love of God the Father, the grace, righteousness, and salvation of God the Son, and the comfort, testimony, and witness of God the Holy Ghost, as they shine forth in the everlasting gospel to sinners; and we bring our own spirits under bondage to the law. This notion springs from the compound of pride and unbelief. And it does not, as we vainly think, make us zealous of good works. So far from it, that all this is contrary to that faith which works by love, and is ever the parent of gospel obedience. "For we are not under the law, as a covenant of works, but under grace, the free favour of God in Christ, according to covenant love." Rom. vi. 14. And we stand accepted, justified, pardoned, and saved, not by the works of the law, but

by faith in Christ. Stand by this, and you are safe; depart from this, and you are fallen from grace. "Therefore, we are called upon, be not high minded, but fear." Rom. xi. 20. For, it is high-minded pride in the extreme, to imagine that God is in covenant with such fallen, wretched sinners as we are, who can of ourselves do nothing to please him. Therefore, fear to set aside Christ the head of the covenant, and to set up yourself in his stead. Fear to set aside his obedience to the law, to exalt your own in the room of Christ's. For this is to use the law unlawfully, and to treat Christ most contemptibly. So is it,

2dly. To seek to gain righteousness by the law, or obtain justification before God, on account of any obedience of ours to it. This is directly contrary to God's wisdom, justice, glory and truth, which are all engaged in that sacred edict, "By the deeds of the law, shall no flesh living be justified in God's sight." Why not? "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom iii. 20. Where? In the sinner's conscience. Now has the Spirit of Christ enlightened you to see the purity, spirituality, and perfection of the law? Do you see yourself a sinner against the law, under the curse of the law, and exposed to suffer all the wrath revealed against sin by the law? O then, what stupid folly, what egregious madness, to think of being made righteous by your own obedience to the law, and to be justified by your own works! For after you have strove to your utmost and done your best, still by the law is the knowledge of sin, and the curses of the law are against every sinner, who doth not perfectly and perpetually fulfil, every one of the righteous precepts of the law, in thought, word, and deed. Have you done this? Where is the man who hath? Shew him, and we have inspired authority to pronounce Him "a liar." 1 John i. 8. The sin which is in him spoils, and ever will spoil all his boasted perfection, and pretended self-righteousness, by his obedience to the law, and justification before God.

Besides, by thus using the law unlawfully, we strive to make the God of truth a liar, pour contempt upon "the one righteousness of his beloved Son, which is unto all, and upon all who believe." Rom. iii. 22. "By which sinners are justified from all things, from which they cannot be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 39. And we do despite to the Spirit of grace, who testifies of, and glorifies Christ, as the one righteousness of sinners, in whom they are justified, by whom they are made righteous, and through whom they are freed from all condemnation of the law. "For, if righteousness came by the law [that is, if any one sinner on earth is made righteous before God, and justified in the sight of God, by his obedience to the law,] then is Christ dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21.

O that ever there should be such a heart in us, to think that the obedient life and sin-atonement death of the Son of God; is an affair of such trifling consequence, as to be vain and ineffectual to the purpose of making us sinners righteous before God, and justifying us in his sight! and yet, we really do possess such a heart, whenever we use the law so unlawfully as to aim to fulfil it, seek to be made righteous by it, and justified before God on account of any obedience of ours to it. But here is a death-wound to every such attempt. If there had been a law, which could have given life, [spiritual life to keep it, and power to fulfil it] verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, [the best thing you ever did in your life, yea, ever since you believed in Christ, it arrests as sin, shuts you up in the prison of self despair as a sinner, and cuts off all glorying in yourself as a righteous person. Why] “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, [of being righteous in him, and justified by him alone] might be given to them who believe.” Gal. iii. 22. That is, that all the comfort and happiness, contained in the promise of righteousness, life, and salvation, might be enjoyed in that sinner’s conscience, who believes in, looks wholly to, and relies entirely upon the work of the Son of God, in his perfectly obedient life, and sin-atonement death only. Whereas, the unlawful use of the law in seeking to be made righteous by it, and justified at all by our obedience to it, as effectually deprives us of this comfort, as shutting our eyes excludes the light and glory of the sun, when he shines in his meridian splendour. Therefore, look diligently to this, lest at any time you fail of this comfort and blessedness of the promise. Again,

3dly. It is to use the law unlawfully, ever to attempt, by our present obedience, to make the least amends to God for our past transgressions against it. We have sinned. Our consciences are convicted, and burdened with guilt, our hearts pained with grief, and our souls tremble for fear. What must we do? Whither shall we flee? To the law? That says, thou art a cursed sinner. Will you reply? I will do better. I will strive; by future obedience, to compensate for past sins. The law knows no such commuting and compounding. Would any malefactor offer such a foolish plea in a court of justice? Hear what the law says, fulfil perfectly, or be damned eternally. It cannot abate a tittle of its perfection. Its righteousness extends to thy best deeds, and pronounces them cursed, because imperfect; and therefore cannot avail a jot for thy worst. This attempt is a rejection of the gospel of grace, and a refusal to listen to the voice of our heavenly charmer, charm he ever so wisely. For he saith, “COME UNTO ME, all ye who labour under the guilt of your sins, and are weary of the burden of

them, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28. There is scarcely a text in the Bible I can turn to so readily as this, having so frequent an occasion to have resource to it. Blessed be Christ for it. For without it, I know not what would become of such a sinner as I am. And he says, O blessed word! precious anchor-sheet to a sinner's soul! "Him who cometh to me, [be he whom or what he may] I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37. His precious blood hath made an atonement for ALL sin. There is remission of ALL sins in his blood *only*. "It sprinkles the heart from a guilty conscience assuredly." Heb. x. 22. "And it cleanseth from ALL sin, most effectually." 1 John 1. 7. O what slight is put upon the precious, all-availing blood of the Son of God, to turn from it, to our obedience to the law! O be ashamed of such base, unbelieving conduct! "For, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the blood of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10. By his life of intercession for us before God. In a most dark and distressing hour of legal terrors, this text, glory to the Lord, brought such comfort and joy to my soul, as are inexpressible. Study it deeply, prize it highly. Turn to it constantly. And use not the law unlawfully. For this we do,

4thly, If we use it, satisfy our conscience, and seek to get peace to our minds, by our obedience to it. "For the law worketh wrath." Rom. iv. 15. Where? In the conscience. There it works wrath, and nothing but wrath, unless your conscience be seared. Then, indeed, you may sleep easy under legal dreams, and self-confident delusions, but you must awake sooner or later, under legal terrors on earth, or more dreadful torments in hell. For the law ever brings us sinners in guilty before God, and in our own consciences. A sense of guilt and wrath are inseparable. Nothing but the blood of Christ, can cleanse from the former, expel the latter, and bring peace into the conscience. "For, Christ hath made peace by the blood of his cross." Col. i. 20. "We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, in our hearts and consciences." Rom. v. 1. Therefore, not by doing the works of the law, but by believing the work of Christ, we sinners obtain, and enjoy peace of soul. The Lord grant that we may, more and more.

5thly, It is to use the law unlawfully, to set it against the promise of life in Christ. This is a most prevailing error of this day, whereby many are distressed, and more deluded. Take heed against it. For Christ was made a curse for us. "He hath perfectly, and for ever redeemed, all who believe in him, from the curse of the law." Gal. iii. 13. "They are blessed by God the Father in Christ." Eph. i. 3. But to sup-

pose that any of these may ever perish under the curse of the law, for their sins, or for want of perfect obedience, a perfect righteousness to answer all demands of the law, is to make the good news, and joyful tidings of the gospel, nothing more than much ado about nothing, faith void, and the promise of eternal life of none effect. Yea, it is to make the God of truth a liar ; the oath of God, in confirmation of his truth and promise, and for the strong consolation of the heirs of promise, to fail, and, O horrid to mention ! the God of holiness himself to be fore-sworn. And it brings our own spirits under legal bondage, wrath, and anguish. These are the certain, awful, unavoidable consequences, of setting the law of works against the gospel promise of life by grace.

Whereas faith, or rather the Spirit of God by faith, puts us into full possession of Christ, of God's promise of eternal life, yea, of eternal life itself in Christ. We have the fullest assurance of this from God's everlasting love, and Christ's sacred truth. For thus he testifies. " God SO loved the world, [even ALL whom he ever loved at all] that he gave his only begotten Son, [to seek and to save them] that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. Is not this fully sufficient to establish our faith, and confirm our hope of eternal life in Christ ? But, if possible, Christ has given us a word of fuller assurance than even this. For he says, " Verily, verily, [this is like the strongest oath, as though he had said, As sure as God is true, and I am Truth itself] I say unto you, that he who believeth on me, HATH everlasting life." John vi. 47. He does not say, *may* have, or *shall* have, but every believer actually now HATH everlasting life, in and with Christ his head, by faith and hope in him : he has a right to it, meetness for it, and a foretaste of it in his soul ; yea, his soul is alive to Christ. Christ is the life of his soul. And so surely as Christ lives, he declares of all his believing members, " Ye shall live also." John xiv. 19. Therefore the love of God, and the truth of Christ, must fail ; yea, the life of Christ himself must be lost, before any believing member of his can perish, and not enjoy everlasting life. Beside, how can Christ, with the least truth or propriety, call it *everlasting life*, if believers may possess it for a season, be deprived of it, and never attain the full enjoyment of it in heaven ? Thanks, eternal thanks, and never-ceasing praises be to thee, O loving Saviour, that thou hast not only obtained eternal life for us, poor sinners, but dost also divinely assure us of enjoying this life by thee, and in thee. O pardon our unbelief and folly, in ever turning from thee, to the law of works, to the wounding our souls, and dishonouring thy name !

O it is most blessed to have this point, of the greatest im-

portance, well digested in our understandings, well settled in our minds, and well established in our consciences, that we, as believers, are as much freed from obedience to the law, in point of justification, as the saints in glory are ; and as much absolved from all the condemnation of the law, as though we were perfectly righteous in ourselves, and had never sinned. We have nothing to hope for from the law, in point of justification before God ; nor any thing to fear from it, in respect to condemnation in the sight of God. Why then should we ever turn to use it unlawfully, or judge of our state by it, and not according to what we are in Christ ? “ When we know it is only the letter of death, and the ministration of condemnation.” 2 Cor. iii. 7. For hear the inspired apostle, “ And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, [the everlasting covenant between the sacred THREE, on behalf of sinners of mankind, which was confirmed by the mouth of God to Abraham, as the father of the faithful, and to all his believing seed in Christ,] the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise [of the gift of eternal life by and in Christ] of none effect.” Gal. iii. 17.

Now, can it in the nature and reason of things be supposed, hat a God of infinite wisdom, unchangeable veracity, and everlasting love, should choose his people in Christ, enter into covenant with Christ for them, “ Bless them with all spiritual blessings, in Christ,” Ephes. i. 3, 4, and make the promise to Christ, to give them eternal life, “ Before the world began.” Tit. i. 2. And yet, after all this, give a law, which should disannul his own covenant, make void his promise, and destroy his blessing, by setting over their heads a ministration of death and condemnation, and subject them to suffer all the wrath and curse of the law for their sins ? Surely, this must be to impute folly to the Most High ! O may we detest the thought with the utmost abhorrence of soul !

But to bring this matter nearer home to our consciences. Have you heard the voice of the Son of God in the gospel, and are you made alive ? Do you believe on his name ? Have you found peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ? Doth the Spirit of truth declare, “ There is no condemnation, to them who are in Christ ? ” Rom. viii. 1. “ Are all who believe, justified from all things ? ” Acts xiii. 39. Have you eternal life in Christ ? Will you then ever attempt to set the law of wrath, curse, and condemnation, against the gospel of peace, pardon, and eternal life ? Will you set the curse of the law, against the blessing of God ? The condemnation of the law, against the justification of Christ, and think that you are so under the law, as to fulfil it, or perish in your sins ? If so, what must be the consequence ? You cannot enjoy one peaceful

hour, while you thus act. Your conscience must be distressed, and your soul miserable. This is inevitable. For, as you are not living by faith on the Son of God, you cannot enjoy the love of the Father, nor the comforts of the holy Ghost.

But you say, I am a sinner. That is true. Therefore I am under the curse of the law. That is false. But if a sinner, how vain and foolish to fly to the law for any hope, when it condemns you? "For you, as a believer in Christ, are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made you free from the law of sin and death." Rom. viii. 2. Therefore, you are called to walk in the Spirit of life, liberty, and love; and to obey, not in the oldness of the letter, to work for life, righteousness, justification, peace, and eternal life; but to walk and obey in the newness of the Spirit, with the zeal of faith, the influence of love, the comfort of peace, the joy of hope, and the victory of patience, in righteousness and true holiness, all the days of your life, shewing forth the praises of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who hath translated you out of nature's darkness, and from under the bondage of the law, made you accepted in Christ, and translated you into his glorious kingdom. This is the free gospel spirit which you, sinner as you are, must stand fast in, live and walk in, from day to day. And in this way, you will yield more acceptable obedience to God, bring more glory to God, and more honour to Christ, than by working and striving under the law, all the days of your life, to get righteousness and holiness by it. The Lord in mercy keep us in this believing, loving, hoping, obedient spirit, till he shall appear, to take us to himself. Amen.

A COLLECT.

O God the Father, who hast declared thyself well pleased in thy beloved Son, who has obeyed thy law perfectly, and is assuredly the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth, pardon our folly in turning aside from Christ, and turning to the law for righteousness, hope, and salvation. Lord grant that we may ever cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart, stand fast in him, glory of him, abide by him, and walk humbly with him, that we may bring forth the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory of thee O Father, thee O Son, and thee O Holy Ghost, Three persons in one undivided God-head, to whom be praises, now and ever. Amen.

The Eighteenth Lord's Day.

THE LAWFUL USE OF THE LAW.

We know that the law is good, if a Man use it lawfully. 1 Tim. i. 8.

THE best things are liable to be abused to the worst purposes. The worst things may be subervient to the best ends. The gifts and talents which God has bestowed on us, may, through our corruptions, minister to our pride, and prove an occasion of our falling. The sins and follies of others, may prove a warning to us, stir up fear, and excite watchfulness in us. Antinomian licentiousness, or lawless liberty, which sets aside the holy law of God, as entirely useless to believers, should cause us, more diligently to study the nature and use of the law, what the saints of God speak concerning it in his word, and what effects it had upon them. Self-righteous legalists, who pretend to exalt the law, perfectly to fulfil it, expect righteousness by it, and justification before God, by their obedience to it, should cause us to bless and praise the Spirit, the glorifier of Christ, that he has not left us under such proud, self-exalting delusion; but that he has convinced us of sin, and of the purity and spirituality of the law, shewed us, that righteousness comes not by our obedience to it, but that we, as sinners, are under the curse of it; and hath led us to Christ, who suffered the curse of the law for us, and perfectly fulfilled the law in our nature, for our justification unto eternal life, that we might worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus only, "and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 3. "And that we might be dead to the law by the body of Christ." Rom. vii. 4. In which body, the curses of the law were sustained, even unto death, and the righteousness of the law fulfilled even unto our everlasting life. "But do we then make void the law, (render it entirely useless to believers) through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law," for all the ends and purposes which God intended it. Rom. iii. 31. For we know that the law is good, if a man (who is married to Christ by faith) use it lawfully. O let us lift up our hearts to our ever blessed law-giver, and praise him for the gift of Christ our precious law-fulfiller, and pray for his grace, and the teaching of his Spirit, that we may use the law lawfully to his glory, and the furtherance of our faith and joy in him.

What is it to use the law lawfully? The law, undoubtedly, has its uses as well as the gospel. And by reason of use,

“We have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Heb. v. 14. The good which God intends by both, and the evil use which men make of both. Therefore, to use the good law lawfully, must be to the very ends and purposes for which a good God gave it. And these undoubtedly are, the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the comfort and holiness of his people. These God hath joined together. These let no man dare attempt to put asunder. While with open face we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord in the gospel, so we also see the glory of the Lord in the law. Therefore,

First, We use the law as a clear mirror, or perfect looking-glass. In it we behold the glory and majesty of the Lord: the sovereign power he has over us, and the uncontrollable right he has to demand perfect purity, and sinless obedience from us. And that nothing short of this can constitute us righteous before him, and justify us in his sight: and that anything short of perfect righteousness, leaves us under the curse and wrath of his holy law, and exposed to everlasting damnation. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” He is a sinner before God, a transgressor of the law of God, and deserves to suffer the vengeance of God. James ii. 10, 11. The justice and truth of God, the giver of the law, are engaged that his law cannot abate one jot, or tittle, of the purity, spirituality, and perfection of its righteous demands, no more than God himself can cease to be just and true. The law of God is holy, just, and good, and in it, as in a glass, we may see the perfect holiness, infinite justice, and goodness of the Lord. The law is a perfect copy of what God is in himself, and of his holy mind and will concerning us. Therefore the law, or God by the law, condemns murder in the heart, lust in the eye, and sin in the very thought, and requires the utmost perfection in the inward parts. Nothing short of this can fulfil the law, and justify us before God. Every thing short of this, comes short of the glory of God, and leaves us under the condemnation of the law, and without the least hope in God, from the law. The command of the law, or of God, by the law, is, be perfect, be sinless, come up to the full standard and perfection of every command, internally and externally, and be blessed. Fail in one point, and fall under the curse of the law. “For, cursed is every one who continues not in ALL things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” Gal. iii. 10.

Now here is the glass of God’s law, to shew us what the Lord is in himself, and what he requires, by his law, us to be. If you clearly see this, like Moses at the giving that law, so terrible is the sight, that with him, you will say, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” Heb. xii. 21. But do not smear this clear

glass of God's law, with that corrupt notion, which is natural to us all, and which many daringly set up, in opposition to God's law, to maintain a good opinion, and a good hope in and from themselves, which they call, *lex remedians*, or a remedial law. Supposing, that as we cannot come up to the purity and perfection of God's law, that God will bring that down to us, and therefore he will accept our sincere endeavours, if we strive to do our best, to please him, though we cannot come up to that perfection which his law requires of us. This is a glass of man's making, and a cursed, flattering, deceitful glass it is. It is composed of materials, not taken from God's holy law, nor his blessed gospel, but fetched from the bottomless pit, whose smoke obscures to our view the glory of God's nature, the purity of his law, the love of his beloved Son, and the grace of his holy Spirit, as revealed in the everlasting gospel: while it ministers to cursed pride, supports vain hopes, hardens in devilish sin, cherishes abominable unbelief, and causes sinners to go down to hell, with strong confidence in their hearts, and a lie in their right hand, neither fearing the threatenings of God's holy law, nor embracing the promises of his blessed gospel. Against this glass, well may we cry out with David, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, quicken thou me, in *thy way*." Psalm cxix. 37. "For thy law, is the truth." Verse 142.

2dly, We use the law lawfully, as a glass to shew us our spots, deformities, sins, impurities, failings, and imperfections; to mortify our self-righteous pride, to kill our vain hopes, and false confidences in ourselves, and in all that we can do. Paul says, "I was alive without the law once; for without the law, sin was dead." Rom. vii. 9. How was all this? He had got, what we all have by nature, a very deceitful glass, this *remedial law*, to look at himself in, and he was vastly pleased, highly delighted, at the sight of himself. He was all self-complacency, fully satisfied that he was alive to God and goodness. He felt no sin: no pain, no burden of, and grief for sin. Sin was dead. He was alive, and who but he, for zeal of God, and love to goodness? But, when the commandment came,—pray, who brought it? Who held the glass of God's holy law before Paul's eyes, and gave him sight to see himself in it? The lover of sinners, the glorifier of Christ, even the Spirit of truth. Well, and how did Paul like the sight? How did it affect him? Says he, "Sin, taking occasion by the law, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." I could not have suspected that I had such cursed lusts, such evil desires, such wicked covetings, contrary to the holy law, if the law had not irritated them, and caused me to see and feel them. "For sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Sin re-

vived, and I died." "Now I know that the law is spiritual, and I (as a fallen sinner in my corrupt state) am carnal, sold under sin. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?"

Now Paul became dead to the life of his own righteousness. Now he began to live by the faith of the Son of God, and by his righteousness *only*. Happy life! glorious righteousness! blessed glass! most adorable Spirit, who convinced Paul of his former life of deadness to God, and quickened him to a new life in Christ! Paul was ever after looking in this glass, to view his spot as a sinner: to keep down the pride of his own imperfect righteousness, and to exalt Christ and his perfect righteousness, all his days. And when he came to the upshot of all, with death in his eye, and judgment in his view, what do we hear him talk about? His own inherent righteousness and perfection? O no! But from a clear sight of himself, a humbled heart from what he knew of himself, and with an enlightened understanding to see the preciousness of Christ's person, and the glory of his righteousness, he breathes out this ardent desire of his soul, "That I may be *found in Christ*, not having on my own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God [of God appointing and imputing, which his beloved Son wrought out for sinners like me] by faith." Phil. iii. 9.

So, poor old *Cardinal Bellarmin*, that great champion of the church of Rome had been fighting all his life, against the protestant doctrine of Christ's righteousness being imputed to sinners, by God the Father through faith, to make them righteous before God, and justify them in his sight. He used to speak very degradingly against it, and reproachfully of it, calling it a putative or imaginary righteousness. But when he came upon his death-bed, and the glass of God's law was presented to him,—what was the consequence? Alas! his confidence in his own righteousness forsook him, and, like a man awakened out of a dream, (and surely a golden dream it is, for any sinner upon earth, to think that he has got a righteousness of his own working out,) he cries out, *Tutissimum est*, it is the safest to be found in Christ, and his righteousness only.

So when *Isaiah* saw himself in the glass of God's law, the infinite purity of *Jehovah*, and his own pollution as a sinner, he cries out, "Wo is me, I am undone. I am unclean, and mine eyes have seen the *LORD* of hosts." *Isai.* vi. 5. And *Job*, with all his boasted integrity, and exalted perfection, viewing himself in the glass of God's law, exclaims, "Behold I am vile! What shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." *Job* xl. 4. His mouth was stopped. He was become guilty in his own eyes before God. "I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, [in the glass of

the holy law, in all its purity and perfection] wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job xliii. 5, 6. And David, when he had a clear view in the glass of the law, says to the Lord, "I have seen an end of all perfection, [the holiest saints on earth come short of the righteousness of the law, and its purity, spirituality, and perfection] but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Psalm cxix. 96. Too broad for any sinner to extend his obedience to the full extent of it.

Thus to look at ourselves daily in the glass of the law, is to use it lawfully. For it never flatters us, but shews us what we really are, sinners, miserable sinners, law-condemned, hell-deserving sinners. A persecutor in queen Mary's days, pursuing a protestant into a house, where he hid himself, charged the woman of the house to shew where he was. She pointed to a great chest which had a looking-glass on the inside the lid, which the papist opened, and said, He is not here. Look in that glass, said the woman, and there you will see the heretic. Thus if we want to find a sinner, if we look in the glass of God's law, we shall discover him, and cry out, I am the man. This sight of ourselves, brings down our lofty looks, humbles our proud hearts, bows our haughty spirits, cuts off all pretensions to, and hopes in our own righteousness, by shewing us the very best of it is but as filthy rags, which cannot hide our nakedness, bear the test of God's law, but must be burnt like straw, by the fire of his justice.

Ah! my fellow sinners, this is the sight we daily want. This is the sight the glass of God's law continually holdeth forth to us. For,

The law's a mirror, in which men may see,
How bad they are, how good they ought to be.

True, this sight is very terrifying, and very distressing, and enough to drive us to despair. It was intended it should, to self-despair of ever hoping to fulfil it, be made righteous by it, and justified by our obedience to it. "For, the law was added because of transgressions." Gal. iii. 19. "The law entered, that the offence might abound." Rom. v. 20. In the sinner's sight and conscience. For this is the solemn edict of heaven, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Rom. iii. 20. O what proud flesh, and dead flesh must they have, who talk of a perfect righteousness, and being justified by their works! Surely, the glass of the law, nor the caustic of the law, has never been applied to them. But what must we do? Must we give up all hope in God, and lie down as condemned sinners, and abandon ourselves to absolute despair of justification and salvation? No, eternally blessed be God, we have another use for the glass of the law.

3dly. To see in it that what the law could not possibly do, in that it was weak through the flesh, [we through sin being bereft of power, and become impotent to it] God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh, [the very same nature that sinned, suffered the curse of the law, due to sin] and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, [of his beloved Son] "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, [by Christ our surety,] IN our nature." Rom. viii. 3, 4. O the rich grace of the Son of God, in perfectly fulfilling all righteousness in our nature, to make us righteous, and to justify us. O the amazing love of Christ, in suffering all the curse and wrath of law and justice in our stead! O look in the glass of the law daily, yea constantly, to see the dreadful curses, and righteous requirements of the law, to know how much you are indebted to our precious Saviour, for willingly sustaining the one, and cheerfully fulfilling the other, that you may ever glory of him, and rejoice in him, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, though you have no confidence in the flesh, and know that in your flesh dwells no good thing.

Now this is God's method of making sinners righteous, justifying them in his sight, and sanctifying them to holiness of heart and life, even by faith in his beloved Son, and in no other way. "For as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so all became sinners: so by the obedience of one man, [the God-man, Christ] shall many be made righteous, even unto justification of life." Rom. v. 18. The faith of this, makes a poor sinner quite happy in his conscience, joyful in God, and inspires boldness before God. Do you find it thus? or are you distressed in your conscience, because, after all that you can do, still you find, you are a sinner? I will tell you one thing above all the rest that you do, and by which you keep yourself a miserable sinner. What is that? You reject God's truth, and believe satan's lies. Now be open to conviction. Do you, or do you not believe really in your heart, that Christ's righteousness can make a vile sinner as righteous, as any saint in glory is? And that every believer is thus righteous before God, and as perfectly justified, and freed from all condemnation by God, as if he had never committed one sin? 'This is God's truth, the gospel of his grace to sinners. Do you really believe it? Now speak your thoughts. Do not keep satan's secrets. Methinks I hear you say, "I am afraid to believe it. I think it presumption. If I did believe it, I fear it would make me live in sin, disregard the holy law, and be content without a righteousness of my own." Now this is open and honest. Poor soul! so you think Christ has wrought out a righteousness for sinners, which if you except, it will make you live in sin? That God imputes a righteousness, which will make you de-

spise his law? And that the Spirit bears witness to, and comforts sinners by faith in the righteousness of Christ, that they may live as they list? O the unreasonableness of unbelief! Only believe God's truth, and try the expedient. You will certainly love him. Faith begets love, and love obedience. A righteousness of your own! Do you know what you mean? How long have you been working for it? When do you expect to get it? How and by what means attain it? Hear God's truth and rejoice, "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness." Rom. x. 10. He worketh not for it.

Hear the judgment of inspiration, from the lips of one who laboured long in the fire, and spent his strength for nought to make himself righteous, and at last was forced to come to Christ's feet and believe on him for righteousness. Hear Paul, and tremble at thy conduct. "For, they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Rom. x. 3. But, to all who have,

Lastly, Another blessed use of the glass of the law is, to see it as a rule of life in the hands of Christ, our precious law-fulfiller. Hence believers are said to live, and walk by faith, in the Spirit, in the truth, and in love. Therefore their obedience is the obedience of faith, under the influence of the Spirit, agreeable to the gospel, springing from love to Jesus, for redeeming them from the curse of the law, and working out a righteousness to justify them,—From love to God for imputing this righteousness to them, and justifying them as ungodly sinners,—And from love to the Spirit, for convincing them of sin, and comforting them by the faith of Christ. None can know the powerful force, and sweet influence of this faith and love to all holy obedience, but those who enjoy them. We do not obey in order to be made righteous by our works, but to glorify God, and honour Christ, from gratitude of soul, for making us righteous, in whom our persons, and our works, are accepted by God. O the joy of faith, the influence of love, and the force of gratitude. We never want motives to obedience while these are present.

"Therefore, our obedience is not called obedience unto life, but unto righteousness." Rom v. 6. Why so? The former sentence is, "Of sin unto death." The antithesis naturally requires that it should be, "Of obedience unto life." But that is not the case. Our obedience is to Christ, who is our life, and in whom we are righteous. "For we serve the Lord Christ." Col. iii. 24. He presents us and our work, perfectly acceptable to God. Therefore, we pray to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, mind, the *fruits* of righteousness) which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God. And we have our *fruit* unto holiness, and the end shall be, everlasting life. For, we

are dead to the law, and married to Christ by faith; therefore we delight, "To bring forth fruit unto God." Rom. vii. 4. O for the increase of faith! O that love may abound more and more, so that we may be always abounding in the work of the Lord, doing those things which are pleasing in his sight, to the honour and glory of his holy name! "For, we are not without law to God, but under the precious law of love to Christ. 1 Cor. ix. 21. This is the joy of our souls, and the life of our obedience.

A COLLECT.

O GOD of our righteousness, who, when we were dead in sin, cursed by the law, and exposed to death eternal, didst send thy beloved Son to fulfil the law, and suffer its curse for us, that thou mightest make us sinners righteous, and justify us ungodly, in him: we beseech thee send thy Spirit into our hearts, to give us the comfort and joy of this by faith; and to enable us to live upon thy beloved Son, in whom only thou art well-pleased. Spirit of the Lord, so convinces us of sin, as to cut off all proud hopes, and false confidence in our own righteousness, and cause us ever to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to glory in his righteousness only, that we may walk in Christ, in newness of life, and all holy obedience. O that we may be dead to the law by the body of Christ, and alive to God by his righteousness, that cursed pride may not reign in us, but that deep humility may ever possess us, to the honour and glory of thee O God, now and ever. Amen.

The Nineteenth Lord's Day.

CHRIST'S GRACIOUS DEALINGS WITH SLEEPING PROFESSORS.

Behold, I stand at the Door, and knock: if any Man hear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Rev. iii. 20.

A ZEALOUS opposer of the doctrines of grace, in their usual way, declaiming in this text, and calling upon sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, to open their own hearts, and let Christ in, who stood knocking and waiting for that purpose, urged the following case. Suppose the king should come and knock at the door of any of your houses, how eagerly would you open to him? After sermon, a judicious person observed to him, suppose, Sir, every one were dead in the house, who then would arise and open to the king? There is one certain, fixed, invariable rule to try by, and judge of the sense that may be put upon any text. It is this. Is it agreeable to the analogy of faith, which ever exalts the glory and the grace of God in Christ to sinners, and ever cuts off all occasion of their glorying in themselves, of their own free will, natural power, and human merit? If a sense is put upon any text contrary to this, reject it. If the sense accords with this, receive it. Hence you will be sure to act wisely, as acquiescing with the covenant office of the Spirit of truth, which is, ever to convince us of sin, and how totally we all are debilitated to every good word and work, and to glorify Christ in his sovereign love, gracious purposes, righteous designs, and glorious salvation of us, according to covenant undertakings, as our head, surety, and representative.

Though we dare not say, mistaking the sense of a single passage of scripture, is a damnable error; yet we may safely conclude, that distresses on one hand, and delusions on the other, arise from mistakes of the word of grace and truth; and that obstinately to persist in any fundamental error, is of a damning nature. For, hereby, we corrupt the sense, pervert the meaning, and destroy the intention, (so much as in us lies) of the God of truth. We make his word yea and nay, uncertain and precarious: and instead of its being a perfect, uniform system throughout the whole, we cause many passages in it to appear like a member out of joint, a trumpet which gives an uncertain sound, or a discordant note which spoils the whole harmony of music. Therefore, we ought ever to be careful to compare scripture with scripture; spiritual things with spiritual:

so as not to take up a text at random, destroy its connexion with its context, apply it to persons and things, which were never intended by it, and warp it from its original sense and meaning, as many do. Therefore, to our souls' profit, and to our Lord's glory, let us consider this text in the following order. And while we are thus engaged, let us look to the God of all grace, that our souls may indeed be profited, and his glory really advanced in us, and by us.

1st. To whom were these words of Christ originally addressed, and to whom may they be now applied?

2dly. What is implied, in Christ's standing at the door and knocking?

3dly. The gracious declaration, and precious promise, he here makes.

1st. To whom were these words originally addressed, and unto whom may they be now applied? Not to dead sinners, who are totally unconcerned about their sins, utterly thoughtless about their souls, and entirely neglectful of the gospel of Christ. Whatever addresses, warnings, or invitations may be, in the word of God to such; yet it is plain these words were not spoken to persons of this stamp. No. They come nearer home, even to professors in the church of Christ; yea, to members in the church of Laodicea. Whether this was a national, established church, a Presbyterian, Independent, or Baptist church, it matters not. For names alter not the nature of things. And such kind of professors as were in this, are no credit to any church, nor any honour to Christ, the head of the church. By considering what Christ says of these professors, these church members, we shall easily perceive what kind of persons they were, and how nearly their case may come to ours. The Lord grant us to be faithful to our own souls!

2dly. "I know thy works." Never conceive that Christ is an unconcerned spectator of our lives and actions; and that he cares not, whether we walk after the Spirit, or after the flesh. This is an awful species of atheism. It proceeds from the licentiousness of our nature, and the unbelief of our hearts. But this is the confession of faith. "O Lord thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasseth my path, and art acquainted with all my ways. For, there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether." Psalm cxxxix. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Prov. xv. 3. Therefore, this is the first reproof Christ gives to these professors. You vainly and foolishly think, because you are joined to a church, and make profession of me as your Saviour, that I will wink and connive at your works, though they are contrary to faith in me, love to me, and zeal for the honour

and glory of me. But be not deceived. I know thy works: the first motion of them, the principle they proceed from, and the end they are directed to. I also notice all thy works, which are directly contrary to the profession you make of me. And as I know, so I will surely visit you for them.

3dly. I know that thou art neither cold nor hot. Not entirely cold, and totally dead: nor warm and lively, in love to the truth, zeal for it, and glowing ardor to adorn and walk worthy of it, to my honour, and my people's profit. Were there such professors then? Does Christ thus testify his knowledge of their frame and conduct? Come hither, then, ye frozen-hearted professors, who dare ignorantly and wickedly decry warm frames and comfortable feelings, and take conviction and shame to yourselves from the mouth of Christ. To despise these because ye have them not, is the way never to enjoy them. O but what ye want in heat, is made up in light and knowledge. You have great store of this. Where? In your heads. So doubtless had these Laodicean professors. They were as light as a full moon in a sharp, frosty night, and were as cold also. Though not quite dead with cold, yet benumbed, and not comfortably warm with love. Christ is not reproving want of light in the head, but the warmth of love in the heart: living at a distance from him, the Sun of righteousness, and being content to dwell in the frigid zone of this earth, while the warm attachment to the things of it, left the heart cold and dead to Christ, his precious truths, holy ways, and beloved people. There is neither warmth, life, nor spirit, in the affections to these; but a cold, benumbing, shivering fit of fear seizes such, lest they suffer persecution for the cause of Christ. They do not totally give up the profession of him, but coldly give up every thing, which would expose them to persecution for him. They have a warm zeal for their characters and interest in the world, but frozen affections to Christ's honour and glory. This drew from Christ this ardent wish, "I would thou wert cold or hot." And this awful threatening, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." As though Christ's heart was sick, and his stomach heaved against such luke-warm professors. Do we see a likeness of ourselves here? O that we may cry earnestly to him for mercy, for want of warm love to him in our hearts! But,

4thly. Amidst this cold, luke-warm profession, Christ re-proves for something more provoking. For to the pride of fulness, is added to a heart of coldness. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Verse 17. They had speech without knowledge: words without meaning: talking without feeling. Amazing, that a cold heart should yet possess the fever of pride.

They had lost both the sense of Christ's love, and the feeling of their own poverty, misery, and wretchedness. Though stripped of both, they saw it not; yea, riches abounded, wealth increased, and nothing was wanting in their hearts. All was safe and confident in apprehension. A more awful state of professors cannot be pictured. O dread to trifle with convictions of your own wretchedness and poverty. Fear to get rid of them by any means. Better, far better to be an agonizing, groaning, sighing, miserable sinner at the feet of Christ, than to grow high in opinion, and strong in confidence, while cold in love. O, that while I am writing, or you are reading, may conviction like a dagger, pierce our hearts, and let out the corrupt blood of false confidence!

5thly. Christ in mercy, councils such, to buy of him pure gold, for their extreme poverty, a glorious raiment for their shameful nakedness, "and a precious eye-salve, to cure their blindness." Verse 18. How are these to be bought? "Without money, and without price." Isai. lv. 1. That is our mercy, for we are all poverty itself, and have nothing to buy with. Christ means, to come unto him, humble ourselves before him, call upon him, search his word faithfully, implore his Spirit ardently, and never rest, never give over, till we have really got in possession, what we pretend to by profession, clear, spiritual sight, heavenly light, warm love, the sense of the clothing of his righteousness and the graces of his Spirit. O that we may come to him daily, and buy these of him constantly, at his own price, even as free gifts, to the sensibly wretched, and the miserably undeserving, seeing our need of them, and that we cannot be easy without them! For, he speaks to us in tender affection, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent," Verse 19; as though he had said, All my reproofs against your conduct, proceed from love to your souls. Though your ways I hate, yet your souls I love. Believe my love, let it break your hard hearts, and change your bad conduct. For,

Secondly, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. What is implied in this? Behold, take special notice, lay it to heart, let this sink deep in your spirits. You imagine I am within, and have the best room in your house, a place in your hearts and affections. But with many it is not so: a notion of me floats only in their heads, while I am shut out of their hearts. Behold, I stand without, the door is shut upon me, and fastened against me. Cutting words, to those who profess to know Christ and love him. O my friends! O my soul! is it thus with us? Search diligently, examine closely, let conscience answer faithfully. Is the Lord really within us, or not? or have we let in other lovers, and shut out our loving Saviour?

Pause one moment and say. Thou once warm-hearted professor, whose soul, heretofore, was all on fire with love to Christ, warm zeal for his truths, heavenly delight in his holy ways, and burning affection to his ordinances and his people, say, how is it now? Once, you could not hear his holy name blasphemed, but you shuddered and reprov'd; his precious truths maligned and opposed, but it called up a holy indignancy of heart. Once, your soul knew no happiness, but in the company of Christ's people, and conversing of his love, truths, and salvation; while the company of those who neither knew, feared, nor loved Christ, was your aversion; all carnal games, sensual sports, and vain pleasures, your very soul abhorred. Then the language of your heart was, none but Christ, none but Christ. I give up all for him. I enjoy all in him. He is my whole heaven, my complete happiness, my only portion. But, how is it now? Is Christ within the heart, or shut out at the door? A change of conduct, and company, awfully evidence the latter. O that we may not trifle with precious Christ, and our immortal souls! For he says,

2dly, I stand at the door, and knock. I come as a lover, stand as a friend, and knock as a suitor. The idea of this knocking, we have, Song v. 2. It was the Beloved who knocked—it was at night—the church was asleep—the voice of Christ was in this knocking.—She knew his voice—and therefore it cannot intend dead sinners, who never heard the voice of Christ, have no life from him, and know not the voice of him. Where Jesus hath love for a soul dead in sin, he does infinitely more than barely knock at his heart for admittance, and wait for the exertion of some power, which the sinner is totally destitute of. He might just as well have knocked at the coffin of Lazarus, and waited for his hearing the sound, restoring himself to life, and coming forth. Christ knows, and we also know, that we have no ears to hear, hearts to understand, nor life to open to him, till he quickens us, and opens our hearts as he did Lydia's, to attend to his word. Acts xvi. 14. Then, being made alive by him, having eyes to see him, ears to hear him, and hearts to understand the loving kindness of him, he knocks at our doors, speaks to our hearts, and calls upon us to act like ourselves, living members of him our living head. Blessed be his loving name, when we were dead in our sins, he said not, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead *may* hear my Voice, if they will, they *may* live, if they will but exert some power of their own; but they *shall* hear my Voice, they *shall* live." John v. 25. He speaks with the voice of sovereignty: He quickens by almighty power as a God; and then he knocks, and addresses with the rational affection of a loving and beloved friend. Again,

3dly. I stand, and knock. This implies knowledge of the state, and affectionate concern for the person, at whose door Christ knocks. Though it be a night of uncomfortable darkness with their soul, yet (O condescending love!) he waits on them, and knocks to alarm them. For, he is deeply interested in, not only their eternal safety, but their present comfort and well-being, therefore it is a knock of love. We do not knock at any one's door at random, without any meaning, and go away without an answer. Nor does Christ. Suppose not such folly in wisdom itself. Therefore it is a knock of knowledge. It is also an effectual knock to all Christ's people. He neither knocks so low as not to be heard, nor does he give only one knock, and go away disappointed; but he *stands* and knocks. He knocks so loud, and stands so long, till he gets an answer. In the night season, when any one knocks, it is usual to ask who it is, and what is their business? and we do not open till we are satisfied. Thus loving Jesus acts by his beloved people. When his dear disciples saw him walking on the sea, in the night season, they cried out for fear. But Christ said, "It is I, be not afraid." Matt. xiv. 27. So his knocks may alarm our fears at first; but when we ask, who is there? and Christ answers, "It is I, be not afraid. Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Song v. 2. Then it has a suitable effect upon us. Thus Christ knocks by this epistle. Here is implied, long standing, and reiterated knocking, yet Christ's patience was not wearied: He would not depart without an answer. And O what an affectionate address, what loving appellations does he use! yet be astonished. What says his spouse, his love? "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them." What frivolous, trifling excuses! By which we may understand a very unbecoming frame of soul. Though the poor believer knew it to be her beloved, yet she discovers a backwardness to open to him. She had put off her conversation-garment of close walking with Christ. She had travelled from him. She had washed her feet, as travellers used to do. She was gone to rest, in a kind of carnal ease and composure, and was loath to be disturbed. But yet she says, "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone." Mind the next words. "My soul failed when he spake." She fainted away, and fell into a swoon, at his voice. O when Christ speaks by the power of his spirit, the words of his grace, peace, and love, to the heart of the believer, in sleepy, carnal frames, it arouses the soul, and causes it to sink down in shame and confusion. Loving, gracious words from Christ, effect gracious purposes in the heart. They awaken it, and

cause it to seek Christ. Thus, this believer; she recovers from her swoon, and—what did she? go quietly to her bed again and compose herself to rest? O no, she could not. Christ's knocking, and his voice, had awakened and alarmed her. An arrow from the quiver of Christ's love had pierced her, with convictions of her shameful sin and egregious folly. For Christ put his hand in by the hole of the door. He touched her heart by the finger of his love, therefore, says she, "I sought him, but I could not find him. I called him, but he gave me no answer." Song v. 6. This caused distress and sorrow. Agitated by these she was sick of love. She gave not over seeking, till she found Christ, and says, in the joy of her soul, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Thus Christ stood and knocked, to an effectual purpose, even to cause the soul to open to him, and not rest satisfied without the enjoyment of him. This he effects by the loving voice of his word, and the powerful convictions of his Spirit, upon the hearts of all his believing people. For, he will not suffer their hearts to be easy without him; and such is his love for them, that he will not be happy without the possession of them. Therefore, to his kind standing, gracious knocks, loving voice, and powerful convictions, he adds,

Thirdly, This gracious declaration, and precious promise, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here is a case supposed, and a blessing promised. First, the case; Hear my voice, and open the door. What is implied in this? Spiritual life, and spiritual willingness, to spiritual purposes. The spiritually dead can neither hear the voice, nor stir one step to open the door. They have neither will nor power. Suppose any place the IF at the door of their own will and power, surely we may reverse the word, and say, Fy on them, for their pride and egregious folly. But it implies that Christ will neither force our wills, nor break the door; yet so loving, so gracious is our heavenly guest, that he rationally convinces our mind, powerfully persuades our judgment, sweetly engages our will, and lovingly attracts our affections unto himself, by the voice of his gracious word, and the power of his efficacious Spirit, that we cheerfully, willingly, and delightfully open to him, and earnestly cry, Come in, thou beloved of my soul, come in.

Take my whole heart and let it be,
For ever sealed to all but thee.

The opening the door, is the discovery of the desires of the soul unto Christ, and to the remembrance of his name, the cry of the heart after him, and the longing of the soul for the enjoyment of him. It is the exercise of the believing mind

towards Christ, the act of faith on him, the hope of love to him and the exertion of the affections after him ; knowing that our consciences cannot be peaceful, nor our hearts happy without him. Do you hunger and thirst after Christ? Is this your case? Blessed soul. The hypothetic *if*, is changed into a positive case with you. The thing is certainly done; you actually do open the door to Christ. Sacrifice not at all to your own power. Bless Christ, and give the whole and sole glory to him, and joyfully attend to,

2dly. The precious blessing promised. I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. O how delightful is this supper, after a fatiguing day of darkness and distress! But the company of the blessed *guest* gives the sweetest relish to the food, and the highest joy to the feast. For Christ means here, nothing less than *sensible* communion with the soul, and ravishing communications of peace, love, and joy, from himself, to the hearts of the poor sinners. This is a feast indeed to the soul! It makes the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, quite happy: yea, fills him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Feel it we may; feed upon it we shall: experience we can: but fully explain it, we are not able, for it passeth all understanding, exceeds all knowledge, yea, it is unspeakable. O we cannot describe our sense and feelings, when we have Christ not only sensibly with us, but also enjoyed *in* us! Can we refrain with Joseph from not seeking where to weep, even tears of the greatest joy? For did he see his brethren before him? we see our most precious elder brother Jesus with us, yea, we feel him in us. Did Joseph hear that his beloved father was yet alive? behold, we hear, and know, and feel, vile and worthless as we are, that our heavenly Father lives to love and bless us, is fully reconciled to us, and perfectly at peace with us, in Christ the Son of his love. He witnesses this in us, by the Holy Ghost given unto us, who sheds his love abroad in our hearts. Were we not to rejoice for all this, the very stones in the street might cry out against us. Yes, ye dead stones, we know ye will, and do cry out against us; enthusiasm this in the very extreme. We boldly tell you, from the feelings of love, and under a sense of pity, in the words of the poet, "Then all are weak, but rank enthusiasts." To such weak persons, we know our talk of supping with the Lord, and enjoying of him, is a feast of derision. But we know also, that ye speak evil of what ye are ignorant of, and despise what you have no relish for; therefore your conduct to us, is an evidence that we have been with Jesus, and that he is in us.

A COLLECT.

O LORD Jesus, who has bought us with thy blood, take and

keep possession of our hearts. Be more and more precious to us, that we may give up every earthly enjoyment, for the sake of thy blessed presence. Grant that we may count all things but loss and dung, that we may win thee, and be found in thee. Dwell in us by thy love and grace, and cause us to feed on thee in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving. Grant, Lord, that we may be nourished by thee, grow up in thee, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by thee, to the glory of thee, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so whom he praises in the highest, now and evermore. Amen.

The Twentieth Lord's Day.

THE LORD'S LOVE TO, AND CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN
DARKNESS.

Who is among you who feareth the LORD, who obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, who walketh in Darkness, and hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the LORD, and stay himself upon his God. Isai. 1. 10.

WE should never, never forget, that we are sinners, loved with sovereign love, elected by sovereign choice, called by sovereign power, justified by sovereign grace, animated by sovereign promises, supported by sovereign strength, live upon sovereign mercy; and therefore, our natural power, and free will, have just as much hand in our salvation, as they had in our creation. We ought ever to retain this truth in our minds. (1st.) To hide pride from our eyes, and to humble our hearts. (2dly.) To support and comfort our souls, in fighting the good fight of faith, and in running our heavenly race, ever "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Heb. xii. 2. (3dly.) That our sovereign Lord may have the whole and sole glory, from the confession of our lips, the love of our hearts, and the devotion of our lives. This is the spirit and temper of real Christians.

But, says a poor sinner, "How can I do this? for my soul is in darkness. I see no light of comfort. The natural sun returns from day to day, and by its cheering light, and comforting beams, spreads joy and gladness over the face of creation; but not to me returns the Sun of Righteousness, He is set, I fear, never, never more to rise on my soul, with his comforting rays." Like Paul, "Neither sun, moon, nor stars, have appeared to me, in many days." Acts xxvii. 20. I have no light from the Sun of Righteousness, nor from the stars of promises. Dark, very dark, is my soul; and disconsolate my state. Surely no soul ever felt such darkness before. I mourn it in silent sadness, and gloomy dejection. I have neither light to look upward; comfort to look inward, nor power to go forward. The Lord hath totally forsaken, and entirely forgotten me. He has cast me off for ever, and abandoned me to hopeless despair, and therefore I may as well"—What? Stop, O soul. Thou who walkest in this darkness, stop and listen; For,

Lo here's a voice of sov'reign grace,
Sounds from the sacred word.

It is purposely directed to you. It is exactly suited for you. Attend to the gracious words of the text. Consider the loving speaker of them. He tenderly enquires after you, as though by name. He gives loving advice to you, as if present with you. The Lord grant that we may so ponder these words in our minds, and so meditate on them, that we may get some profit from them, to his glory. Let us consider,

1st. That this walking in darkness, is not a singular case.

2dly. The discovery of the Lord's love to, care over, and concern for such.

1st. This walking in darkness is not a singular case. For all God's people have, in all ages, more or less, experienced it, and complained under it.* Thus we read of Abraham, "Lo, an horror of great darkness fell on him." Gen. xv. 12. Here is darkness, great darkness, yea, an horror of great darkness. And this fell too upon the friend of God, the father of the faithful: this too on the evening of that very day that the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward; gave him the promise of a blessed seed; imputed righteousness to, and justified him, and in consequence of all this, Abraham offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, as he commanded him. Surely then, great and horrible as this darkness was, it could be no token of the LORD's anger and displeasure against him. No. But the Lord is a sovereign, and all his dispensations are in infinite wisdom, and ever accompanied with unchangeable love, to all his people, and shall all work together for their good. There was the Lord's will, and his love, in this darkness of the father of the faithful; there is the same also, in all that his children fall under.

Job complains under this state. "O that I knew where I might find the Lord! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, but I cannot see him." *Job* xxiii. 3, 8, 9. Thus was he in darkness, and had lost sight of the beloved object of his soul. So *David* complains, "LORD, thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. LORD, why

* Indeed I know a popular preacher, who absolutely denies, that this text is spoken to believers in Christ, but to unbelievers who are in nature's darkness. But with equal propriety he might have asserted, it belongs to apostate angels, who are reserved in chains of darkness. But to support his opinion, he profanely asked, Does God play at bo-peep with his children, sometimes hiding his face, and at others, causing the light of his countenance to shine upon them? Does not this discover very great ignorance of the scriptures, of himself, and of Christian experience?

castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?" Psalm xxx. 7. and lxxxviii. 14. "Verily, thou art a God who hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour," says the church. Isai. xlv. 15. And in Jeremiah's time she complains, "The LORD hath led me, and brought me into darkness." Lam. iii. 2. "Yea, I called upon thy name, out of the low dungeon." Verse 55. So the church speaks of sitting in darkness." Micah vii. 8. Did not our Lord himself say to satan? "This is your hour of darkness." Luke xxii. 53. Were not his beloved disciples in darkness, from the time of his death, till they saw him risen again? Was it not a season of darkness with Paul, when he was under the buffetings of satan? And Peter speaks of a need-be, of being in heaviness, "through manifold temptations." 1 Pet. i. 6. And this one text is a standing record of covenant love, suited to the state of God's righteous people in Christ, "Light is sown for the righteous." Psalm xcvii. 11. If light be sown for them it shall spring up in them. Verily they shall reap its comfort, and enjoy its blessing, in God's own time, way and manner.

Now whatever may be the cause, or causes of this darkness in God's people, matters not. Whether dark dispensations in providence, afflictions in body, loss of substance, relations, friends, comforts, &c. or whether we are under darkness of soul, through the Sun of Righteousness withdrawing his clear and comfortable shining, whereby we see not our interest in him, and are not blest with comforts from him; but are going from ordinance to ordinance, and from one person to another, enquiring like the church of old, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Song iii. 3. Still all proves this truth, that it is not a singular case for a believing soul to walk in darkness. Yea, it is a singular comfort, that our case is not singular; but that the saints of God, in all ages, were in the like circumstance; and that we cannot entertain a doubt, but that God loved them. This brings us to consider the

2nd. point, The discovery of the Lord's love to, care over, and concern for, those who walk in this darkness. But says a dark benighted soul, can this be proved? O if I could but be satisfied that the LORD has any love to, care over, or concern for me, in my dark and disconsolate state, verily, it would throw a ray of hope into my dark dungeon of distress, and turn my heaviness of soul into the joy of the morning! But is it possible? Can this be proved? Pray do you ever trouble your head about, and with earnestness enquire after, any thing which you have no love to, care about, or regard for? But, if you really love a person, then it is natural for you to shew your care for, and regard to him, by inquiring after what state and circumstances he is in, how he goes on; and if you think he needs

it, you are ready to assist him with your kind advice. So it is in affairs of this life. Well then, if so, look at the text, and see if that does not fully prove our Lord's love to, care over, and tender regard for, those souls who walk in darkness, and see no light.

This is fully manifest, 1st. By this loving enquiry, Who is among you, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Who makes this enquiry? Satan to devour you? A malicious enemy to harass and distress you? No. But a most precious friend, to counsel and comfort you. Verily, it is the voice of our beloved the friend of friends, the friend of sinners, the Saviour of the lost, the comforter of the distressed,—“**THE WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR.**” Isai. ix. 6. It is the enquiry of the very same loving Lord Christ, who came to his dear disciples, when they had lost sight of him, (after he was dead and buried) and with the tenderest affection enquires “Children, have ye any thing to eat?” John xxi. 5. So here, who is among you, that are poor, dark souls, who have no light to see their interest in the comfort of my love, the happiness of my peace, and the joy of my salvation? Yes. This is the very person, that here speaks and makes this most affectionate inquiry. Even he, who just before in our text, in the sixth verse, says, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them who plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” You know who suffered this, and who was spit upon for our sakes. Was not this the strongest evidence of his love to, care over, and regard for us? Surely it was. Then this inquiry after those who walk in darkness, and see no light, is equally so.

Who is among *you*? in my called church, and among my believing people, who fear the Lord: in whose hearts God hath put his covenant grace, “I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me, and I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” Jerem. xxxii. 40. O this fear is a most precious grace! The Lord binds himself to that soul, and that soul is bound to the Lord, how great soever his darkness is, or his want of the light of peace, the comfort of love, and the joy of salvation may be. Still he walketh on, though as it were groping.

Who is among *you*, that obeyeth the voice of his servant? “Even me, who am God's servant by his election.” Isai. xlii. 1. and my own free choice. I came willingly and cheerfully, to undertake, and to finish, the work which my Father gave me to do: even to finish transgression for condemned sinners, to make an end of sin, for helpless sinners, to bring in everlasting righteousness, for naked sinners, and to work out salvation, for lost sinners. Who obeyeth my voice, to come unto me, and believe in me, to receive these blessings, as free gifts from my hands?

Doth such a soul walk in darkness? Hath he no light to see, that his state is safe, and his salvation sure? Doth he fear in darkness, tremble in doubt, and is he racked with perplexity concerning the state of his soul? Is he sighing out in darkness? O could I see that God is *my* Father, that Christ is *my* Saviour, that the holy Spirit is *my* comforter; then under all other kind of darknesses, all would be well, had I but the light of life, the light of God's countenance, lifted up upon my soul. But, as the light of spiritual joy, and the comfort of assurance is wanting in my soul, all is dreariness, barrenness, darkness, and deadness. Well, but Christ not only manifests his love to, care over, and regard for souls in this state, by tenderly enquiring after them, but also, (2d.) in his counsel and advice to them. What are they to do, in their dark and uncomfortable state? He tells them. Let him *trust* and *stay*. Trust in what? Stay himself upon what? Doth Christ counsel such to trust in themselves, in their sincere resolutions, their good works, religious duties and performances, their tears of sorrow for sin, groanings under sin, and meltings of heart for sin, or in any thing they can find in and about themselves? Or does he advise, Let him stay, and support his mind, upon his past fine frames and comfortable sensations, the rich experiences he has formerly had, of God's dealings with his soul? &c. Just as good bid him fill his belly with the east wind: or stay his mind upon the rapid stream. No, here is his mercy, "Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay himself upon his GOD." Let us dwell a little on each of these exercises of the mind.

1st. Let him trust in the name of the LORD: or, in other words, let him give credit to what is revealed of the LORD. By the name of the Lord, we may understand those covenant relations, in which Jehovah has manifested himself to us, in his word, as FATHER, SAVIOUR, and COMFORTER, in the man Christ Jesus. In our darkest seasons, and most disconsolate circumstances, blessed be the Lord, no enemy can deprive us of God's revealed truth; in which a Father's love, a Saviour's grace, and a Comforter's witness, are manifest in every page. This is fully sufficient to encourage our trust, to draw out our confidence, and establish our faith, in the name of the Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Hear then, the Father's love in giving his Son, attend to the grace of the Son, in giving himself for our sins; and because we are slow of heart to believe the love of the one, and the grace of the other, hear the witness of the Holy Spirit, which he bears in and by the word, for the establishing our hearts in the truth, and supporting our souls in an hour of darkness, and a time of temptation.

Hath the LORD revealed himself under the endearing name

of FATHER ? Hath Christ taught his disciples to pray to him, OUR FATHER ? Doth the Spirit of adoption teach us to cry, " Abba, Father ? " Rom. viii. 15. Then let us trust in him as such. But says the soul walking in darkness, I cannot see that God is *my* Father, and therefore I cannot trust in him as such. nowhere revealed, that God is the Father to any one soul in particular by name, but it is clearly and plainly revealed, that God is the Father of sinners in general, and of every sinner in particular, who believes on the name of Jesus, the Son of his love. Hence Paul says, " Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. " Gal. iii. 26. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of Sinners ? Then trust in the name of God, as the Father of sinners in Christ. This trusting honours the Lord, will excite praying to him, and draw down light and comfort from him. " For like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them who fear him. For he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust. " Psalm ciii. 13, 14. What father is there, but pities, and would do all in his power to relieve his child, when under distresses he calls upon him, and cries to him ? Well, though you may not clearly see, and comfortably know, that God is your Father, yet trusting in him will bring the comfort of it, for we are fully assured, " The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth (that is, approveth) them who trust in him. " Neh. i. 7. " And the Lord is nigh unto all them who call upon him. " Psalm cxlv. 18. But he hath left upon record, a word that will ever suit your state and circumstances, and mine, be they ever so affecting and distressing. The Lord says, for our encouragement, " I will leave in thee, (in his church, and among his people) an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. " Zeph. iii. 12. And to encourage and embolden dark and dejected souls, to trust in the name of the LORD, we have in the text, Christ's warrant and command.

2dly, Let him trust in the name of the LORD, the SAVIOUR : even the name of JESUS, which is above every other name, to sinners. You are a sinner, and in darkness. Jesus himself speaks, and gives you warrant, counsel, and command to trust in him ; in all that he is, as a Saviour to sinners : in all that he has done, in our nature, for the salvation of sinners : in his life to obey the law, to justify sinners, in his death for the atonement of our sins, in his resurrection for our justification, and in his life and intercession in glory, to save us to the uttermost. O trust in this name Jesus, and in this salvation of Jesus, and by thus honouring him, and his glorious work, you shall sweetly find, and joyfully say, with his church of old, " Thy name is as precious ointment poured forth. " Song i. 3.

“Behold, God is my salvation: I will TRUST, and not be afraid.” Isai. xii. 2. Trusting in Christ, in the season of darkness, will keep the mind fixed on him, till his brightness appears, and his glory, as the sun of righteousness ariseth, and chaseth away darkness from the mind. Your trusting soul may say, “When I sit in darkness, the Lord Jesus shall be a light unto me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.” Micah viii. 9.

3dly, Let him trust in the name of the Lord the COMFORTER. He reveals the everlasting love of the Father, and the precious salvation of Jesus the Saviour, to us sinners in the word, and he applies, and bears witness of this, to our hearts. Thus he comforts us, by filling us with all joy and peace. But how, and in what way? In believing, or trusting in the name of the Lord. We cannot enjoy the Spirit’s comforts, but in believing his truths. Mind this. You are in darkness, you want to enjoy light in the Lord, light from the Lord, therefore, you are counselled to trust in the name of the Lord, of the Lord the COMFORTER. As no power but that of the Holy Ghost, can comfort you, with the light of life, the light of God’s countenance, light to see your interest in Christ’s love, and to bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God. O trust in his name, as the comforter. Believe his power. Doubt not of his willingness, even till he has filled thy soul with light, thy heart with comfort, and thy spirit with joy. “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” Habak. ii. 3. Thus when we walk in darkness, and see no light, we are counselled and commanded, by our *wonderful Counsellor*, to trust in the name of the LORD. Believe his word. Take his advice. Practice his counsel. But again he says,

4thly, Let him stay upon *his* God. I thank thee, O Christ, thou faithful, true witness, for this heart-reviving counsel. For verily, hereby we are fully assured, that God is *our* God, as much as when we walk in darkness, and have no light, as when we walk in the light of his countenance, the comfort of his peace, and the joyful sense of his presence. O how sweet to reflect, dispensations though ever so dark, do not destroy covenant relations between God and his people. Dark soul, consider this. Rejoice in this. And praise God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost for this. O stay thy soul upon this unchanging God! But what means it to *stay* upon his God? The word, and the work, are exactly suited to your state, for relief and support. In your darkness, do not you find weakness and dejection of mind, lowness and faintness of spirit, and in your walking are you not weary and tired, ready

to give up, and give over all for lost? Are you not ready to think, and say, I can hold out no longer? What must I do? Take your Saviour's advice, *stay upon your God*. Use him as your prop of support, and your staff of strength. God is all that to a weak mind, as these are to a weak and weary body. Therefore lean the whole weight of your soul, with all your weakness and weariness, and every concern, wholly upon him. As the Psalmist says, "Cast, or roll, thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. Psalm lv. 22. Or as the Holy Spirit by Peter counsels, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." 1 Pet. v. 7. Or with the church, "*Leaning upon thy beloved.*" Song viii. 5. You cannot honour him more, nor please him better: nor in any other way can you obtain support and strength, Christ himself being judge, who thus counsels and directs us, out of sovereign grace, infinite wisdom, and most tender affection, to stay, prop, support, and lean our minds upon our God. Therefore, though you walk in darkness, and see no light, yet be not discouraged in following on to know the Lord, in keeping his sabbaths, attending the preaching of his word, remembering him at his table, by using every means of grace, in searching the scriptures, and calling upon his name, &c. For you see the precious encouragement you have, because Christ loves you, which he manifests, (1st.) In his tender inquiry after you. (2dly.) In the precious counsel he gives you. (3dly.) In declaring God is *your* God, though you walk in darkness, and have no light. (4thly.) That your case is not singular, but that you are travelling home to God in the way the fathers trod. Hence, 5thly. Take encouragement to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay your mind upon *your* God. Consider what has been said, and the Lord grant you a right understanding in all things, to his glory and your soul's comfort. From what has been urged, we may draw this.

INFERENCE.

That a soul walking in darkness, thus exercising his faith and hope on the word of God, will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. For the grace of his God, will keep him from them, and strengthen him against them. Hear the experience of such a soul. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Hear his advice to his own soul and others; "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." Psal. xxvii. 13, 14. This waiting respects the internal disposition of the mind, as well as engages to the use of external means. Thus we are kept from fainting in the good ways of God, and from turning to any evil. Thus we shall get courage from the goodness of the Lord, while

we are hoping and waiting to see his light in the land of the living.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, who art the light and glory of thy people; enlighten our darkness, and in thy light, grant us to see light, that we may glory in thee, and be followers of thee. Lord, deliver us from our natural darkness of sin, and from the power of satan. O that our path may be, as the shining light, which shines more and more to the perfect day. Strengthen our faith and hope in thy word, and so keep us from fainting in thy ways, but encourage our hearts, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Twenty-first Lord's Day.

ON THE LORD'S DELIGHT IN HIS PEOPLE.

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. Psal. cxlvii. 11.

SYMPHORIANUS, a Christian young man, after he had been almost scourged to death, as he was dragged on to suffer martyrdom for his religion, his own mother met him in the way: when lo, instead of tearing her hair, rending his clothes, or making grievous lamentations for her beloved son, she heroically called to him, "O my son, remember life eternal. Look up to heaven. Lift up thine eyes to him who reigneth there. Life is not taken from thee, but only exchanged for a better." At these words of his mother, the blessed youth was so animated, that he went joyfully to execution, and cheerfully laid down his head, which was severed from his body. O the victory of faith, the joy of hope, and the triumph of love!

Had this Christian lady so great pleasure in her son? could she take such delight in seeing him offer up his life for the sake of Christ, and from love to him? Did she so encourage, and animate him to this, by her counsel? O what infinitely greater pleasure doth the Lord take in his people! How does he counsel, animate, and encourage them by his words, and uphold and strengthen them by his grace, in all their sufferings for him, and his truth's sake? Various are the ways in which the Lord calls his people, to glorify him on earth, and to himself in glory. He gives them a life from himself, then they sacrifice their lives to him. This kind of martyrdom, every child of God is made willing to suffer, for the glory of Christ. For the new life they have from him, is so preferable to the old life of nature, that they desire and delight to live in the one, and die to the other: to enjoy the one, and give up the other. For the Lord taketh pleasure in them, and they in him. This our text leads us to meditate. O that under the influence of the good Spirit of God, we may so consider this, that our hearts may be comfortably refreshed, and our spirits made joyful in the Lord. Let us consider the pleasure of the LORD—How the Lord can take pleasure in any of the sinful sons of men—and that all such take pleasure in the LORD.

1st. The pleasure of the LORD. By the LORD, or Jehovah, we are here to understand the whole Godhead—"The three who bear record in heaven." THE FATHER, THE SAVIOUR, and THE SANCTIFIER; and these three are one," 1 John v. 7,

one in essence; one in will; one in council and covenant; and one in every transaction of creation, providence, preservation, redemption and salvation. As they have one will: so they have one pleasure. For the LORD saith, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isai. xli. 10. and "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Ephes. i. 11. The Lord hath pleasure in his will: his will is his pleasure. His will is in his word. His word is his will; and declares to us, what he delights in. We have not the least idea of God, but as he has revealed himself by his word: nor of what is his will and pleasure, but as his word informs us. So that all our knowledge of God, and of what is his will and pleasure, comes to us by believing his word. Hence only it is that we have right conceptions of God, and his pleasure formed in our minds, from his word, and by the faith of it. Reject God's word, and you have no more knowledge of him than a Hottentot: you know just as much of his will and pleasure, as a wild Indian: and you can have no more delight in him, nor study to please him, than a devil. Now God can take no pleasure, nor delight, in any character that is not perfectly like himself. There is no man upon earth that comes up to the standard of God's holiness, purity, and perfection. All men have lost the image of God. Therefore, God can take no pleasure in any one man upon earth considered in himself. Yet to God's glory, and our comfort of hope, there is a PERFECT MAN, of whom he has declared, "My soul delighteth in him," Isai. xlii. 1. "I am well pleased with him." Math. iii. 17. This MAN, and no other, hath given us the true and perfect character of God: yea, he is himself the true and perfect character of God: "holy, harmless, undefiled, without sin, and separate from sinners." Heb. vii. 26. Therefore the sacred THREE bear record from heaven to him. For while he the WORD, was bearing record to the true character of God, and perfectly obeying his will, in fulfilling all righteousness on earth, the SPIRIT bore record to him, by visibly descending on him; and the FATHER bore record, with an audible voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Math. iii. 17. This is a stab to the pride of all human glorying, in any human character. But, at the same time, this lays a foundation for the hope of a sinner, be his state ever so desperate, his character ever so infamous, and his circumstances ever so deplorable. For the THREE in heaven, bear record to Christ in the sinner's nature, of being well pleased in him. Therefore consider,

2dly. How the Lord takes pleasure in any of the children of men. Sin has destroyed the image of God in every man, and rendered him obnoxious to his wrath: yea, not only so, but every man is also possessed of a nature as opposite to God's, as

the devils. And in this respect, there is not the least difference between fallen angels and fallen men. Hence God could as soon take pleasure in devils, as in men. How is it then, that he doth take pleasure in any sinful men, and not in fallen angels? How shall we answer this? By his word, and that resolves it wholly, into the sovereignty of his will. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, &c." 2 Pet. ii. 4. "Verily Christ took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. For, both he who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one [nature]: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. ii. 16, 11. Nor hence is God ashamed to call them children: for he is a Father to them, and taketh pleasure in them, because they are one with Christ, and the image of God is restored to them in Christ.

Therefore it is not because of any natural difference, any inherent good qualities, or better dispositions, which they have made than others. No, by no means. For they are, by nature, children of wrath even as others, and are equally as dead in trespasses and sins as others. There is no difference in them from others. But there is great grace, and great glory (as I have before observed in this work) in that little word, called a preposition, *IN*: all the pleasure which God takes in his people centers in it, and springs from it. For the *LORD* loved, chose, views, justifies, makes righteous, and blesses with all spiritual blessings, all his people *IN* Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted *IN* the beloved. Eph. i. 6. Hence as the Lord takes pleasure in the praise and glory of his grace, so he rejoices, delights, and takes pleasure in his people, who are the subjects of his grace. They are his *Hephzibah*, in whom he delights; his *Beulah* to whom he is married. "Therefore, as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so does the Lord rejoice over them." Ps. cxlix. 4; Is. lxii. 4, 5. But not as they are in themselves creatures, and still less as sinful creatures, guilty and defiled; but as they are *IN* Christ, chosen in him, given to him, one with him, and partakers of him. Thus God the *FATHER* takes pleasure in them as his own beloved children. "For thou hast loved them, even as thou hast loved me," says Christ. John xvii. 23. With the very same everlasting, unchangeable love, God the *SON* takes pleasure in them. He was from all eternity rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, "and his delights were with the sons of men." Prov. viii. 31. He felt joy in them, under all his sorrows and sufferings, when working out their salvation. Heb. xii. 2. He joyfully communicates out of his fulness, grace for grace to them, and they will be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the last day, when they shall be introduced by him into the presence and glory

of God, with, "Behold me and the children which thou hast given me." Heb. ii. 13. And God the SPIRIT takes pleasure in them: in quickening, and enlightening them to see Christ, regenerating them into him, leading and guiding them unto him, and into the truth as it is in Jesus; sanctifying and comforting them in him, and keeping them by the faith of him, unto eternal salvation. O what inconceivable love, astonishing mercy, inexpressible grace is this! that the LORD, the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, should take such pleasure, in such vile, apostate, rebellious sinners, as we are, to become a FATHER, SAVIOUR, and SANCTIFIER to us! O how highly ought we to esteem the scriptures, so as to be ever searching them, and praising the Lord for them, as bringing this joyful knowledge to our hearts, and making us wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus! But are we of this happy number? Doth the LORD take pleasure in us? If he does, surely we shall magnify and exalt his word, above the word of man; and all his gracious thoughts, glorious views, and loving ways, above all the little, low, mean, legal, mercenary thoughts, views, and ways of men. And, so sure as the Lord takes pleasure in us, we also shall take pleasure in him. Thus we come,

3dly, To consider. How is this manifested? By fearing the Lord, and hoping in his mercy. Fear, and hope! What! can we take pleasure in the Lord without love? No. It is impossible. But there can no more be scriptural fear of the LORD in our hearts, without some degree of love to him, than we can hope in his mercy, without faith in his word. So that fear includes love, as hope does faith. And these are begot in us, by the gracious discovery which the Lord hath made of himself in Christ, to SINNERS, by the scriptures of truth. These we take pleasure in, and in the Lord as revealed by them.

(1st.) Fear; this implies knowledge of God, and is influenced by the word of God. We are prone to entertain too low thoughts of this fear; whereas it is a peculiar grace and gift of God. The most excellent things are spoken of it. God's people are peculiarly distinguished by it, all through the Old Testament. Godly fear is put for, and includes in it, the whole of a religious character. But it is the character and transgression of the wicked, "That there is no fear of God before his eyes." Psalm xxxvi. 1. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding." Psalm cxi. 10. By it "men depart from evil." Prov. xvi. 6. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, it is a fountain of life." Prov. xiv. 26, 27. We are to be "perfecting holiness, in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii. 1. And the highest character that ever was, or ever can be given of Christians is, that "They walk

in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Acts ix. 31.

Let men's pretensions to comfort be what they may, if they are not coupled with the fear of the Lord, they may be assured, they are not the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Do we fear the Lord? Are we living, walking, and worshipping him, under the influence of the fear of him, as our heavenly Father in Christ? Then we may be assured, that the Lord taketh pleasure in us, and that we verily are the objects of his love, because we are the subjects of his grace: for he himself has put this covenant grace into our hearts. Hear the precious words of the LORD: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Now how may any sinner know, that the Lord is in covenant with him, takes pleasure in him, and will not turn away from him to do good unto him? Here is the sure and certain evidence of it. The LORD himself gives him this sign. "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. xxxii. 40. Poor, dejected, bowed down sinner, who art mourning for want of comfort, and fearing lest thou art not one of God's covenant ones, lift up thy head with joy, and thy heart with praise. For if thou hast the fear of the LORD in thine heart, verily thou hast a place in God's heart, and a name in the everlasting covenant of his love, and in the LAMB's book of life. It is your blessed privilege, with all the Lord's covenant people, "To serve him without fear [that has torment: the slavish fear of being rejected by him] in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of thy life." Luke i. 74, 75. Thus this fear of the LORD is a special, peculiar grace, given to all the chosen of God the Father, all the redeemed of God the Son, by God the Holy Ghost. And thus it is manifest, that the LORD, the whole God-head, takes pleasure in such; even as a loving parent does in his children, whom he dresses and adorns with costly raiment, that he may look on them with pleasure, and be delighted with them. O for more of this loving fear! for, this fear is not a solitary grace. It is never alone in the heart. But,

2dly, All who fear the Lord, hope in his mercy. This implies a sense of their sin and misery; therefore they do not hope in themselves, nor in any righteousness and goodness of their own. They know they have none. They see nothing in themselves, but ruin and wretchedness, hopelessness and despair. There is a dead hope, and a lively one. The former is natural to us. It arises from, and centers in our nature, which is dead by reason of sin. It deceives us all. The latter springs from revelation, its author and object is the Lord, and it kills the former. "For a living Jesus is our hope," 1 Tim. i. 3;

therefore it is lively. He is the mercy of God. Through him only mercy flows to lost sinners. But how does any poor sinner become possessed of this hope? He cannot tell you without praises. He will tell you with saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. i. 3. As this hope is begat in us, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, so it follows him from his cross, up to glory, fixes upon him, and centers in him, as our forerunner, entered into the presence of God, for us. Hence it is called, "The anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast—Why? because it entereth into that which is within the vail." Heb. vi. 19. Of what use is an anchor to a ship? None, unless it be cast out of it, and enter into the ground, and fastening there it keeps the ship safe and steady, amidst storm and tempest. A ship thus safely moored, and riding at anchor, though attacked by winds, and tossed with waves, yet its head is kept towards the anchor, from whence it is usually cast. So it is with the soul that hopes in God's mercy. The anchor of hope is cast out of sight. It fastens upon Christ within the vail, even in heaven and glory. Hence, the soul, amidst the raging sea of corruption, the storms of temptation, and the blasts of satan, is kept safe and steady, "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." Jude xxi.

Now as this hope is peculiar to all those whom the LORD takes pleasure in, so these things are peculiar to this hope.

1st. It is a humble hope. The subjects of it, like faithful Abraham, "against hope, believe in hope." Rom. iv. 18. Had Abraham looked to natural causes, and considered human probabilities, of his having a son, and all the nations of the earth being blessed in his seed Christ, his hope could not have lived one moment. All appearances in nature and reason were against him. But he considered them not. He had God's promise. That begat his hope. This he looked to, and lived upon. This was the life of his hope. So we find, that every thing in our nature, and carnal reason, is against our hope in God's mercy. We have an evil heart of unbelief in us, a body of sin and death we carry about us, there is not a sin in the world, but the seeds of it are in us, and which we are prone to commit. And our carnal minds are enmity against God. All things in us, and done by us, are against our hope. Why then do we hope at all in God's mercy? Because our hope is out of nature, above it, and contrary to it. Yea, it is opposite to all our corrupt reasonings. For, we have God's promise in Christ, and to Christ; to hope in, and live upon. We live "in hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, promised before the

world began." Tit. i. 2. We enjoy the blessing and comfort of this promise by faith, which is, "Christ in us the hope of glory." Col. i. 27. "For Christ dwells in our hearts by faith." Ephes. iii. 17. Therefore,

2dly, It is a scriptural hope. As our hope springs from nothing within us, but God's promise in Christ to us, we know our hope is firm and sure, and shall never disappoint us. For God's blessed word is its warrant and support. God cannot lie. Our hope in his mercy is founded upon truth. Therefore we cannot perish. We shall enjoy eternal life promised. Hence we love his word of grace and truth, as the charter of our hope. Our delight to hear, read, and study the scriptures, is both an evidence of the goodness of our hopes, and also a confirmation of it. And hence we are ready also, to give a reason of the hope that is in us, supported by the scriptures of truth. O this is establishing and joyful! and

3dly. It is a soul-purifying hope. Every one that hath this hope in God's mercy now, and of enjoying eternal life with God in glory, "purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John iii. 3. How purifieth himself? All who have "faith and hope in God, have purified their souls, in obeying the truth." 1 Pet. i. 22. In this way, the hopeful are to continue and persevere. Whatever the truth, which supports their hope enjoins, they are to obey; what it forbids, they must avoid. In this way only, the comfort of hope is enjoyed. And giving all diligence, in the use of all means, which tend to purify the soul, "the full assurance of hope unto the end, is to be attained." Heb. vi. 11. If this be our pursuit, God's truths will be prized, his sabbaths kept, his ordinances attended to, and all his holy ways delighted in. One word of

CONSOLATION.

Do we then hope in the LORD's mercy? O what a mercy of mercies is this! Verily, it is above every other mercy. Yes, say you, but I am such a poor hopeless, helpless, miserable sinner, that I can take no pleasure in myself. That is of the LORD's mercy. He intended that you should not. Therefore he enlightened you to see yourself, that you might hope in his mercy in Christ; that he might take pleasure in you, as being in him, trusting in him, relying on him, looking to him, and glorying only of him, as "made of God to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and according, as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD." 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. Thus, you are humbled, Christ exalted, and your soul brought into a right frame for the enjoyment of God in glory, where humility will ever reign in us, and praises never cease from us, to God and the LAMB.

Is this to be our eternal state, and our never-ceasing employ in the realms of bliss and glory? Is this our hope? Have we the promise of it in the word of truth, and the earnest of it in our hearts, by the belief of the truth? Hear then, what that word speaks to us. "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." Psalm xxxi. 24. Though our case in ourselves is bad, hopeless and lost, yet our state in Christ is good, safe, and eternally secure. Though we have many, and the worst of enemies to grapple with, our corruptions and lusts, satan and the world, yet Christ is the captain of our salvation. We are provided with the whole armour of God. We are engaged in a good cause. We are sure of victory: shall wear the crown of righteousness, and shall shout in triumph over all, through him who loved us. Therefore be of good courage, ye who hope in Jesus. For, while we are encouraging ourselves in and from God's word, he will strengthen our hearts, by his power, to the glory of his grace.

A COLLECT.

O LAMB of God, the Saviour of the lost, and the only hope of the hopeless, strengthen our confidence in thee, that we may derive more peace, comfort, love, and holiness from thee. Lord, deliver our poor, proud hearts, from our natural, legal, self-righteous hopes, that we may delight ourselves in thee, serve thee with a free spirit, and obey thee in love, to day and for ever, to the glory of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Twenty-second Lord's Day.

SEEKING THE HONOUR OF MEN, THE HINDRANCE OF FAITH.

How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of God only? John v. 44.

THE proud reasonings of men are directly opposite to the humbling truths of God. The honour of man is quite contrary to the honour which cometh from God. Yet, no man ever believed the gospel, or on Christ, as revealed by the gospel, until he saw the greatest reason for it, and that there was the greatest honour in it. And, till this is the case, man, with all his fancied greatness and boasted honour, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, is found wanting. Tried by the touchstone of truth, it is pronounced of him, "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not [spiritual things, the truths of God] is like the beasts that perish." Psal. xlix. 20. "Every man is brutish in his knowledge. Jer. x. 14.

I suppose, no one ever thought himself possessed of a greater share of honour and glory, than Alexander the Great, as he is called. Truly, he was a great tyrant, and a great butcher of mankind. It is recorded of him, "That having conquered a great part of the world, he came to an island of the Brachmans: a people that used no habit but beasts' skins, no houses but caves, no meat but such as nature produced. On his demanding the reason of this their strange kind of life, they answered, We know that we shall die: whether this day, or to-morrow, we know not. Therefore, why should we take care for power to rule, honour to be esteemed, or riches to live in pleasure? With this answer, Alexander was so effected, that he bad them ask what they would, and he would give it them. They demanded, that they might never die. To which he replied, he could not grant them that, because he himself must die. Why then, said they, art thou so foolish to live in such pride, power, and honour, seeing thou knowest thou must die?" This was a mortal stab from rude barbarians, to his wisdom and honour. But such a fool is every man upon earth, who prefers and seeks the honour which cometh from men, above that which cometh from God only. Let us consider,

First, What is that honour which cometh from God only, and how is it enjoyed?

Secondly, How seeking that honour which cometh from man, prevents believing and enjoying the honour which cometh from God only. Lord grant, that in thy light we may see

light: under thy teaching may we know thy truth; and comfortably enjoy thy presence and blessing, while we are meditating on these points.

First, the honour which cometh of God only, and how it is enjoyed. Now this is a fixed truth, from the mouth of the LORD, "Them who honour me, I will honour, and they who despise me, shall be lightly esteemed. 1 Sam. ii. 30. We must honour God, or he will not honour us. But can such sinful creatures as we all are, honour the most high God? Certainly. And it is our greatest honour, and ought to be our constant work. How is it to be done? Our text particularly refers to it, even believing God's word, receiving his Son, and living upon him as our Saviour. This is the work. This is the life of a Christian. Thus he honours God. Thus we are to go on from day to day, believing, receiving, and living. Mind the words. They are in the present tense. It is not, we did, or have believed in Christ, received him, and lived upon him, in days that are past, but are we *now* thus believing, receiving and living? For God is as much to be honoured to day as yesterday. We ever need his word to direct, establish, and comfort us. Christ is ever the same precious Saviour. We stand daily in need of receiving out of his fulness. For we are the same needy creatures, impotent, miserable sinners this day, as we were when we first came to Christ. And we can find no hope, no rest, no peace to our souls, but while we are living upon him. Thus we honour the Father who sent him, for these most blessed ends and purposes.

Now all such God will honour. Why? Because they seek that honour which cometh of God only, and thereby honour him. By receiving his word, they give him credit, and honour him as the God of truth. By receiving of, believing in, and living upon his beloved Son, they honour God, as the God of love, grace, and mercy to lost and perishing sinners, and as the God of inviolable justice and holiness. But how will God honour all such? What is that honour which cometh from God only? (1st.) As they "Avouch the Lord to be their God, he will avouch them to be his peculiar people, and he will be an honour unto them, as he hath spoken." Deut. xxvi. 18, &c. Yea, he will own and honour them, as his own adopted children in Christ. For, hear the Lord, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. vi. 18. Here is a high and heavenly honour for you, O ye sons and daughters of earth and sin! Is it an honour to have a great man, a noble lord, a sovereign king to be our father? But what is this compared to being the sons and daughters of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Lord God Almighty? What! can I a poor creature, a wretched

sinner, stand forth and declare, The Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, the God of universal nature, is my Father? He loves me infinitely more, than ever the most tender and affectionate parent ever did, or possibly could, his most beloved offspring. Therefore, every attribute and perfection of God, is engaged for me.

Great, infinitely great, as this honour is in conception and thought, yet it is more so in enjoyment and experience. For, we not only hear or read this precious declaration from God in his word, but we enjoy the sense and comfort of this highest honour in our hearts. How? Here it is very natural to look into ourselves, and search for a reason or cause in us, why God should thus honour us. But it is impossible to find any. Enough indeed we may find to provoke his anger; but nothing to deserve his honour. The cause is in, and from himself. He loves us freely. His word proclaims it graciously. In believing his word, and living upon his Son, we enjoy the honour and comfort of being the sons of God. And we cannot help exclaiming with wonder and praise, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God." 1 John vi. 10. In consequence of this,

Secondly, We are honoured with access to God, audience of him, acceptance with him, and cry unto him, abba, Father, our Father who art in heaven. Yea, "We have boldness, and access with confidence." *Access*, is free liberty to approach unto God, as a Father. *Boldness*, is a freedom of speech before him, in confessing our sins, miseries and wants, telling him our fears, doubts, sorrows, and distresses; yea, laying open our whole hearts, cases, and circumstances to him, and expecting help and relief from him, just as one would to an affectionate earthly parent. *Confidence* is a well-grounded scriptural persuasion, that our persons and performances shall find acceptance with God. Why? Because we are good and righteous beings, and our duties and performances are so perfect, as to recommend them and our persons to the favour of God? No. Far from it. For, in all we are, and in all we do, we are sinners. Therefore, we can get no access, boldness, and confidence from any thing about us, or done by us; but all springs from Jesus Christ our Lord." Ephes. iii. 12. God's soul is delighted in him, Isaiah xlii. 1, and with us in him. For, he has made us accepted in his beloved Son, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Ephes. i. 6. Therefore we can never be too bold, nor too confident of access to God, by the faith of Jesus, for the praise, the honour, the glory of God's free favour in him, lies at the foundation of this. This honour cometh from God only, and is enjoyed by all who believe his word, and live upon his Son.

(3dly.) All such are honoured with God's special presence

For, "they are the temple of the living God. And he saith, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." 2 Cor. vi. 16. Most amazing honour ! But how can our bodies, which are polluted by sin, and in which sin dwelleth, be the temples of the Holy Ghost, and God dwell in us, and walk in us ? Here is the mystery of grace. But the vail of this is taken away in Christ. For, being one with him, in a state of perfection IN him, new creatures IN him, our sins being taken away by him, and having perfect righteousness IN him, we are presented IN him, without spot of sin unto salvation. Thus God delights in us as his temples, and dwells in us, and walks in us, as being members of, and made accepted in his beloved Son. This honour cometh from God only. And is enjoyed by all who live upon his Son.

(4thly.) They are honoured by being made "kings and priests unto God," Rev. i. 9 ; having obtained a holy priesthood, they "offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. ii. 5. That is, their new-born souls, and devoted bodies, to the worship and service of God. And as kings, they reign with Christ, under Christ, and by the power of Christ in his kingdom, over the power of sin, satan, death, and hell, clothed in the rich, kingly robe of his all perfect righteousness, and are glorious within, by the graces of his Spirit. Such honour have all God's saints. What shall we say more of the honour which cometh from God only, and is enjoyed by these, whom he delights to honour ? In one word, God gives himself to them and says, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." Gen. xv. 1. He makes most precious promises to them in Christ, swears by himself for the confirmation of their faith, and consolation of their souls. Heb. vi. 13. He gives his beloved Son to them, and puts his holy Spirit in them, and assures them of their souls being glorified, and their bodies raised, and that body and soul, shall be eternally honoured, with the full enjoyment of his presence in his kingdom of endless bliss and glory. O ye saints of God, ye sons of God, ye believers in Jesus, all hail. I congratulate ye, for your high dignity, and great honour which your God puts upon you. O study more and more to live like yourselves, humble as poor sinners, yet ever living upon, and rejoicing in Christ, that ye may honour him, and the Father in him, by your life and walk. Let us now see,

Secondly, How seeking the honour which comes from men, prevents believing and enjoying that honour which cometh from God. "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another?" As though our Lord had said, It is impossible. Scripture interrogations, are generally the strongest assertions. Let us view some instances of men seeking honour one of another. But let it be premised, that there is honour and respec-

due from inferiors to superiors. Christianity never destroys, but establishes this. But we are treating of the honour of men, when it stands in competition with the honour of God, the belief of his truths, and receiving his Son. Now in respect to this, we ought ever to adopt Luther's motto, *Cedo nulli*, I give place to none. And we should ever resolve with St. Paul, to know no man after the flesh, but "Let God be true, and every man a liar," who opposes his truth. Rom. iii. 4.

(1st.) "Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees believed on Christ?" This was the question of old. Hereby honour is sought of, and given to men, because of their greatness, power, human wisdom, and self-righteous characters; the great and learned doctors of the day. This is natural and common. But this is taking our eyes off, and turning away from the truths of God, and the misery and ruin of our state as sinners, to look to, and judge by the conduct of such men. Ever remember this truth. "The natural man, [be he ever so great in power, high in esteem, or ever so much revered for his learning, piety, and wisdom] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Why not? "They are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. Would you so honour a blind man, as to trust to, and rely upon his judgment and definition of colours? Why then is your mind at all in suspense, or the least influenced by the judgment of the spiritually blind? Why pay the least respect, or give the least labour to such? Supposing they have all other wisdom, but are not wise unto salvation: all other knowledge, but the one thing needful, they are fools in God's account, and you are guilty of folly in giving honour to them. "For our faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Cor. ii. 5. And "Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God." i. 24. He who has Christ, has wisdom. He who is destitute of Christ, is without understanding.

(2dly.) Clericus is a good scholar, an elegant composer, an eloquent speaker, and bears an excellent moral character. He forms his plan of divinity, upon the writings of a renowned archbishop *Tillotson*, a learned *Barrow*, a famous *Bull*, an eminent *Clark*, and other Authors of their stamp. Hence he looks upon the articles of his own church, as obsolete and heterodox. The scripture truths contained in them, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, free election by God the Father,—full justification and salvation by God the Son—regeneration, conversion, and final perseverance, by the unfrustratable grace of God the Holy Ghost, together with his guiding, sanctifying and comforting witness—the inefficacy and insufficiency of man's works to entitle him to the favour of God and eternal life; all these Clericus has learned of his highly-esteemed authors, totally to deery and declaim; and countenanced by his reverend

brethren to announce, as the flights of enthusiasm, and the rant of methodism. The people hear, honour, applaud, and cry, what an excellent man is Clericus ! While he honours them, as sound churchmen and good Christians, though they are strangers to the doctrines of their own church, reject the truths of God's words, and do not believe in, receive, nor live upon his beloved Son, as the only Saviour.

Thus they seek and receive honour one of another. He is blinded by giving honour to others: they by giving honour to him. And both reject the honour which cometh of God, by believing his truths, and receiving his Son. Thus the blind lead the blind. Awful effects of seeking honour one of another! Such are deaf to this voice of Christ, "Beware of false prophets." Matt vii. 15. Nothing less than a miracle of grace, can save such men-honouring souls, from falling into the ditch of eternal perdition. O what a special, peculiar, distinguished mercy it is to be delivered from such a state, by having our understandings opened by Christ to understand the scriptures, and to see the glory of God, and the grace of Christ shining in every page of them !

(3dly.) This is true also, in respect to a father, a brother, or a friend, who is as dear as one's own soul. How many are kept from believing the truths of God, and enjoying the honour which cometh of God, by looking to, and seeking the honour of men? A father's frown, a brother's displeasure, a friend's disesteem, often prevents our giving honour to God, by boldly confessing his truths which we believe. *Epenetus* is of a most amiable disposition. He cannot bear, that any should be offended by the doctrines of grace. He wishes so to accommodate the truths of God to all men, as to give offence to no one. Therefore he is displeased if you speak strongly of the sovereignty of God, insist much on his electing love, the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and the final perseverance of his saints. These, he says, are points which great and good men have differed about, and therefore ought not to be contended for. This is a temptation that tries many. But does *Epenetus* consider, that this is paying honour to the greatness and goodness of men, at the expence of the honour of God? How can we believe these truths of God, how rejoice in them, how be comforted and sanctified by them, how give God the glory of them, if we thus seek honour one of another? This is directly contrary to the advice of the Holy Ghost by St. Jude, "I exhort that ye should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints." ver. 3. What is this faith, but the doctrines of faith, which are delivered by the Spirit of God, in the word of truth? These are ever to be earnestly contended for in love, as by conflict, combat, or fighting, heartily and in good earnest, zealously and constantly, lest we lose the favor, experience, comfort, and enjoyment of

them. We should ever consider that the truths of God, the doctrines of his grace, are of too important a nature to be so trifled with, as to be made to truckle to the humour, or to be sacrificed to the honour of men, be they ever so great, wise, or learned. The man who does this, cannot believe them heartily, nor enjoy them comfortably. We ought to tremble to think, or act as though we were to say to a dear father, a loving brother, or valuable friend, the truths of my God, the doctrines of my faith, are at your service, to be moulded and fashioned agreeably to your judgment. But we are commanded to "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Prov. xxiii. 23. For we are "Chosen to salvation, through the belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13. One word of

EXAMINATION.

How stand your hearts affected to the truths of God's word, the doctrines of his grace, the Son of his love, and the honour of his name? Is his word precious? Is Christ your honour? Is his Father your glory? Do you look to his Spirit to lead you into all truth? Are his sabbaths your delight? Are his ordinances the pleasure and profit of your soul? Then you will cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for whereof is he to be accounted? Yea, you will cease from yourself, from trusting to your own wisdom to direct you, your own righteousness to justify you, and your own power to keep you. And in spite of all the opposition and gainsaying from the wise, the learned, and the honourable of this world, you will rejoice in, glory of, and give honour to God, that "Christ is made unto you, a poor sinner, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." And therefore you are saved in him, and shall be glorified together with him, to the praise of the glory, not of any faithfulness of yours, but of God's rich, sovereign, unmerited grace, freely bestowed upon you. And you will give honour to whom honour is due. You will love, and highly prize those ministers whom Christ has chosen, called, and sent forth to preach his everlasting gospel, and who with St. Paul, "Shun not to declare ALL the counsel of God." Acts xx. 27.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, be exalted in our hearts, in the glory of thy majesty, the riches of thy grace, the honour of thy truth, and the comfort of thy love. Cause us to cease from man, and to cleave wholly to thee. Make us simple of heart, humble in spirit, and sincere in mind to thee, and thy sacred truths. May we daily feel their power, enjoy their comforts, and live under their influence, through thy grace O Christ, to the honour of God. Amen.

The Twenty-third Lord's Day.

ON THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good Tidings, and—to comfort all that mourn. Isa. lxi. i, 2.

It has been observed, “So honourable is the office of a priest, or minister, that God had but one Son, and he anointed him to that sacred work.” And here we have predicted the very spirit of Christ’s ministry, and the blessed ends of all his preaching. What was foretold in prophecy, was literally fulfilled, when Jesus appeared in our flesh, as man and mediator, and taught the people as the great prophet of his church. O it is so sweet to consider the Son of God, as a real, perfect man, “Of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting:” and that as such the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, to qualify him for, and carry him through all the office characters which he had undertaken to sustain in the covenant of grace, and oeconomy of salvation! And unless we do view and believe in Christ as such, we shall get no blessing, nor comfort from his precious doctrines. The text holds forth to us this doctrine, that God’s people do sorrow, and mourn, and that the Son of God is appointed and anointed to comfort all of them. Let us consider, (1st.) Why, or what are the causes of their mourning. (2d.) How, and by what means, Christ comforts them under their mourning. Let us look up to our precious Comforter, and beseech him for his presence and blessing, that though sorrowing in ourselves, we may rejoice in him, abide in him, and be devoted in heart and life unto him.

First, Why do God’s people mourn, or what are the causes of their mourning? As men, they are subject to the very same troubles, calamities, afflictions, and distresses with others. As they are men of like passions with them, they are alike liable to feel them, be dejected by them, and depressed under them; and also subject to murmur and repine, when exercised with them. In this respect, there is no difference between the children of God, and the children of this world, only this, the former have, what the others are destitute of, the comfortable knowledge and persuasion, that all things are of God, appointed by his providence, and permitted by his good pleasure, and do work together for their good, and his glory. And, they have a covenant God in Christ, to look unto, pray unto, trust in, and rely upon to comfort them in all, support them

under all, carry them through all, and deliver them out of all their outward trials, worldly troubles, and bodily afflictions, which they are exercised with in common with other men. And all this they have, because they believe God's blessed word, and receive and live upon his beloved Son. But yet, all such have troubles of another and spiritual nature, which are peculiarly felt, and mourned for by them only. What are these?

1st. They mourn the cause of every evil, even because they find and feel that they are sinners against God. This mourning begins with their knowledge of God, and of themselves. Nor will it ever end, till they cease to be sinners, which will not be, till they put off the body of sin, and see God in his glory. This fetches up many a sigh from their breast, many a sorrow from their heart, many a groan from their spirit; brings on many a distress upon their soul, and causes many a tear to trickle from their eyes. For, they see themselves sinners in all they are, and in all they do. Sin dwells in them, and renders all they do imperfect. Yea, it taints every duty, infects and pollutes their very best services. And they experience what bishop Beveridge did, "I sin in all I do. Not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, bespeak me a child of Adam." This humbling sense, mournful feeling, and scriptural confession, is peculiar to new-born souls only, who live in the light of truth, know themselves even as they are known, and do not deceive themselves, so as to say, we have no sin.

Natural men may be sorry for sin, because they feel the evil effects and sad consequences which their sins have brought upon them. Their consciences may be alarmed and terrified for sin, and its dreadful consequences hereafter. But they can have no Godly sorrow for sin, because they know not God: no holy mourning because they are sinners, for they have no holy affections and dispositions from God, and to God. They see not the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as it is an infinite evil in the sight of a loving God: that it is the highest provocation to him, a transgression of his holy law, and procures a frown upon the face of our heavenly Father. Nor can they lament the total depravity of their natures, the desperate wickedness of their hearts, the vile lusts and abominable corruptions which dwell in them, the proud, self-righteous hopes which they are the subjects of, nor the unbelief of God's truth which works in them. They neither see, know, nor feel any thing of all these, for their souls are dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore they cannot mourn over, nor be sorry for these. Whereas the regenerate in Christ, have a clear sight, an acute sense, and pungent feeling of all this from day to day. And it is their burden and grief to find, that in their flesh dwells no good thing,—that out

of it proceeds nothing but evil,—that it lusts continually against the Spirit,—that when they would do good, evil is present with them,—that what they would do, they do not with that perfection they desire,—that what they hate, that they too often do,—so that they are brought into captivity to the law of sin, which is in their members. Can they sit down easy, or go on quietly under all this? Impossible. No more than a man under a quick sense of the most excruciating pain, can help crying out: or one, who is weary of an insupportable burden, can help shrinking under it, complaining of it, and groaning to be delivered from it. Hence, with the holy, regenerate, justified Paul, they cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?” Rom. vii. 24. This he calls “The body of sin.” chap. vi. 6. Such is the burden, mourning, and groaning, of all who “delight in the law of God, after the inward man,” and strive to do the will of God from their hearts. They mourn the evil of their nature, as well as the sin of their lives, because their souls are born of God, and are alive to God. This holy mourning, is a sure and certain evidence of it.

2dly. They mourn over the dead body of an incarnate God. For, “Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth before their eyes, as crucified for their sins.” They have seen his sorrows, sufferings, agonies, and death, by the eye of faith, in the word of truth. They have felt the grace of his dying love, and rising power in their hearts. They know the meaning of the cross of Christ, in all its shame, and in all its charms. Therefore, “They look upon him, whom they have pierced with their sins, and mourn for him as one who is in bitterness for his first-born.” But, mind when this mourning, and this bitterness takes place in the soul. Even when that is effected, which the Lord here promises, “I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace, and of supplication, and they shall look, and mourn,” &c. Zech. xii. 10. O when this Spirit of the free favour of Christ, in dying for our sins, is poured upon the heart of a sinner, it melts, it breaks it in pieces before the Lord. It causes a holy mourning for sin, weeping at beholding his love, with supplications to him saying, “Lord save, or I perish.” When by the eye of faith we behold the salvation of Christ, finished in sufferings, agony, and death, then in heart-felt sorrow, we exclaim against ourselves,

Sinful wretch, what hast thou done !
Murder'd God's beloved Son !

We cannot believe the unparalleled love of Christ, without,

3dly. A holy indignation against ourselves, mourning for our sins, which were the cause of all his woe, and our want of

love to him, who so inconceivably, and inexpressibly loved us. His love to us passeth knowledge. Our hearts are pained and grieved that we find so little love to him, and so much opposition in us against him. We know the fire of love ought ever to be flaming to him; but, alas! through the weakness of our faith, how cold, how languid is our love to him? Therefore, we cannot but mourn our want of love to him, who so loved us. We grieve, that we do not more stedfastly cleave to him, abide in him, deny ourselves for him, more closely follow him, and enjoy more sweet fellowship with him, and with the Father in him. How often do we mourn over a hard heart, and for an absent God? saying, with David, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Psalm xxx. 7. "Mine eyes fail for thy word, when wilt thou comfort me?" Psalm cxix. 82. And with Job, "O that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head, and his secret was with me," &c. Job xxix. And with the church we are constrained in sorrow to say, "Verily, thou art a God, who hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." Isa. xlv. 15. This is mournful work for the Christian. For his Lord's presence creates a heaven of light, love, peace, and joy in his soul. His absence a hell of darkness, dejection and distraction. And this experienced, causes mourning for the cause of it, base ingratitude to, and unfaithful deserting, defection, and backsliding from his Lord. Hence mourning, believing hearts, will be crying out,

I cannot live without thy light,
Cast out, and banish'd from thy sight.

4thly. They mourn over their duties and performances, seeing so much deadness, formality, legality, unbelief, spiritual pride, &c. cleaving to them. And so many vain, carnal, worldly thoughts, with so little spirituality, life, power, vigor, love, joy, &c. in them. And because they do not begin them with a perfectly single eye to God's glory, continue them with fervent zeal to, and in the strength of Christ; and end them with deep humility, holy love, and heavenly joy. But they find that self, cursed pride, and self-righteous confidence will creep in. On the one hand, they experience swelling, self-conceit, and self-complacency; or on the other, distraction in duty, weariness of duty, dejection after duty, and a proneness to cast off all duty. This is a grievous exercise to, and the cause of much mourning in the godly. I shall only mention,

5thly. That they not only mourn for what they find in themselves, but also what they see in, and meet with from others. They are exercised on both hands by professors and profane. How often, and upon how many accounts, do the children of

God distress and grieve each other? Hence Paul saw need to exhort, "Bear ye one anothers burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. vi. 2. How are God's people distressed and caused to mourn, for the cruel treatment of wicked men, and on account of the temptations, injections, subtle devices, and artful stratagems of satan? Sometimes they are ready to think, they are given up as a prey into his hands; and mourn over the fears of death, and terrors of hell, dreading, they shall never hold on, nor hold out to the end, but perish at last. On these, and many other accounts which might be enumerated, and which experience teaches, it is the lot of all God's people to mourn for. But for ever blessed be our dear Christ, he is appointed to comfort all who mourn. And glory be to his loving heart, and almighty arm, this he faithfully executes. This is the

Second point to be considered. And a most joyful one it is. The Lord give us joy in considering it. How does Christ comfort all who mourn? The text tells us. By preaching "good tidings," that is the gospel, unto them. Those blessed truths, and comfortable doctrines, which he taught in the days of his flesh, he brings to their ears, by the ministry of his word, yea, preaches to their hearts, by the power of his Spirit. Thus he comforts their souls. Not on account of any goodness or righteousness of their own, but because of his favour towards them, what he is to them, and, therefore, what he hath done for them. Hence all their comfort springs from faith; or believing this.

1st. Christ comforts *all* that mourn, by preaching to their hearts the grace of what he is to them, and what they are in him. Do they mourn, because they are fallen creatures, miserable sinners, the subjects of a body of sin and death? Christ preaches to them, that he is their SAVIOUR. And as having undertaken that office for them, he took their nature upon him; and in that nature he bore all their sins, all the evil of sin, all the curse of sin, and all the wrath due to sin. He perfectly suffered for all this, and entirely took away all this from us, so that though we are cursed sinners in ourselves, yet we are blessed saints in him: though full of sin in ourselves, yet we are without spot of sin in him;—though condemned in ourselves, yet fully justified in him. This is the gospel of Christ. This he preaches to his mourners, that thus they are viewed by Christ, and by God the Father in him. And through the faith of this, Christ comforts all who mourn. O what comfortable knowledge is this, that we are united to Christ,—in Christ,—one with Christ,—and that all that Christ is, and all that he has done, as man, mediator, and Saviour, is ours. Hence he calls upon us, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Isai. xlv. 22. This looking implies constant believing, and experiencing continual

saving, from all the sin, ruin, and wretchedness of our fallen nature, into Christ, his righteousness, salvation, and blessedness. While we thus look, we are comforted. If we mourn for want of comfort, it is because we are not thus looking to Christ. For,

2dly. He pronounces, "Blessed are they who mourn." Why? "For they shall be comforted." Matt. v. 4. They are not blessed for their mourning, nor does this mourning procure their blessedness and comfort. "But they are blessed by God the Father with ALL spiritual blessings in Christ." Eph. i. 3. Even their mourning is a spiritual blessing from Christ, is a precious evidence that they are in Christ,—one with him,—have the mind of him,—and are new creatures in him. For they sorrow after a godly sort. And this "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." 2. Cor. vii. 10, 11. Is not this most blessed comfort for all our sorrow and mourning, to be pronounced blessed by the Lord? But, let us take heed of a legal spirit in looking at our mourning for comfort, instead of unto Christ. For if we do, we shall be ever thinking we do not mourn aright, nor enough; and we shall ever see somewhat defective in it, to distress us; therefore we can never arrive at any solid comfort in this way.

3dly. Do we mourn our want of love to Christ? Are our hearts pained and broken on account of this? He comforts us, by preaching his great, unspeakable, everlasting love to us, causing us to "comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness, which is of God: so that we shall be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. How? "By his dwelling in our hearts by faith." Eph. iii. 17, &c. When Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, our hearts dwell on his love to us, and that increases our love to him. Thus by believing, and dwelling upon his love, he comforts us. For he binds up the broken hearted, with the bands of his love.

4thly. Do we mourn the imperfection of all our duties and services? He comforts us by his word, that we "Serve the Lord Christ." Col. iii. 24. And though imperfection is stamped upon all we are, and all we do, yet "God hath made us accepted in his beloved Son, to the praise of the glory of his grace." Eph. i. 6. Hence Christ proclaims, "Liberty to the captive." Our captive minds, under bondage of the law, are comfortably set at liberty, to approach God with boldness, to present ourselves, and our services, however imperfect, with assurance of free access to, and full acceptance with him. For we come not in our own name. We trust not in our duties

and performances for access. We do not plead them before God, for acceptance. But we come in the name of his beloved Son, in whom we are accepted. And though we are sinners, we come and plead in the name of Jesus Christ, our righteous advocate, who presents our persons and services, perfumed with the much incense of his blood and righteousness, which are ever "an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." Eph. v. 2. And thus our persons and our duties are accepted in Christ. O how animated to duty, how comforted in duty, how joyful after duty, does this faith make us!

5thly. Do we mourn for what we see in, and meet with from others; from wicked men, and from a tempting, accusing, insulting devil? Hear our blessed Comforter declare, "I, even I, am he who comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man who shall die, or the son of man, who shall be made as grass? And forgettest the LORD thy Maker, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and hast feared continually, every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?" Isai. li. 12. It is by remembering the LORD, the word of his grace, the love of his heart, and the power of his arm, that he comforts us. It is because, that we forget the Lord, that we are at any time distressed by the fear of men, or the power of satan. "For, if God be for us, who shall be against us? What shall separate us from the love of Christ? We are more than conquerors over all our enemies, through him who loved us." Rom. viii. 31, &c. Yea, thus the Son of God most comfortably preaches to all his sheep. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John x. 28. Fully sufficient this, to turn our mourning into joy. If we credit Christ's word, it most certainly will. For all things are put in subjection under his feet. And he in our nature, "Through death hath destroyed him, who hath the power of death, that is the devil, that he might deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." Heb. ii. 14, 15. What more could we wish for, or desire to comfort us under all our mourning, than what Christ is to us, hath done for us, and what we are IN him? Let us attend to some brief

OBSERVATIONS.

1st. That Christianity is of an experimental nature. Its comforts are actually enjoyed in the soul. It finds men miserable. It makes them happy.

2dly. That all our comforts are procured by, and flow from

Christ, in our nature, as our SAVIOUR; and can only be enjoyed by believing the word of his grace, and on him, as he is therein revealed to us, and what we are IN him, "and that he of God is made to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. So that we have wisdom from him, to choose him as our Saviour, and to reject all others; to glory in him, and no other, as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And we trample all other righteousness under our feet, as dross and dung. That he is our sanctification; being united to him, and one with him, we are in a holy state; and through communicated influence from him, we have our *fruit* unto holiness, and therefore our end shall be everlasting life. For he is our redemption. We have now by faith in him, the comfort of "Redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins." Ephes. i. 6. And we are waiting in hope, for the full enjoyment of redemption, to the heavenly inheritance in bliss and glory. Therefore,

3dly. As all our comfort comes from Christ, is enjoyed in Christ, and by believing on him, we reject all the comfort which springs from ourselves, and from what we are in ourselves. Such are only fleshly comforts, and fleshly joys. They delude and deceive many. They spring not from faith, but sense. Not the word of Christ, but the pride of nature is their source. Not the righteousness of Christ, but that of man, is their foundation. Not the glory of Christ, but the exaltation of the sinner, is their end. Therefore they can last no longer, than while the poor sinner who possesses them, can vainly keep up a good opinion of himself, and of his own self-sufficiency and importance. Hence,

4thly. As all our comfort is out of, and above nature, we are ever to go out of ourselves, and fix our faith and hope solely on Christ, who is appointed to comfort all who mourn. O let us then prize his word which makes this known to us, and bless his Spirit who brings comfort to our hearts from Christ, by means of the word. Do we want comfort from Christ constantly? Let us search his word diligently. This he commands. For he says, "The scriptures testify of me." John v. 39. All true comfort comes from faith. And faith comes by the word of God. It is begot, nourished, and strengthened by it. For the Spirit is in the word. By the word he testifies of Christ, and glorifies him in our eyes, makes him precious to our hearts, and thus we get the comfort and joy of faith from him.

Lastly, in the word, we have Christ's sweet and precious invitations to come unto him, that we may be comforted by him. Our loving Lord says unto us, vile, miserable, wretched and distressed sinners as we are, "Come unto me, ALL ye who labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi.

28. This coming unto him, is feeding upon his flesh and blood as perfect MAN; and looking to, and living upon his sovereignty, as the almighty LORD. Thus he comforts and refreshes our souls, to the glory of his name, and to the exalting his own free grace.

A COLLECT.

O THOU loving God, and gracious Saviour, keep us mourning sinners at thy feet, that we may be comforted by thee. Suffer neither sin nor self-righteousness to keep us from thee. But grant us so to see our sinfulness, feel our misery, and behold the greatness of thy love, the riches of thy grace, and the fulness of thy salvation, that we may be daily coming to thee, to experience the comfort and joy thereof. O let thy precious promises encourage us, and thy Holy Spirit draw us unto thyself, as the only hope, and the one righteousness and glory of our souls. Amen.

The Twenty-fourth Lord's Day.

ON WORSHIPPING JESUS, AND THE DOUBTS OF DISCIPLES.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.
Matt. xxviii. 17.

CHRISTIANITY is the religion of sinners. Its faith and worship are calculated for sinners. All its doctrines and precepts, exhortations and promises, are suited to sinners. We learn and receive all of them as sinners. No man ever thought of, cared for, nor could understand any thing about Christianity, that he knew and felt that he was a miserable, hopeless, helpless, desperate sinner. Then, and not till then, can any one see, know, and understand, the grace and glory contained in these precious words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world, to save SINNERS." 1 Tim. i. 15. Christianity clearly teaches us the true character of God, and of ourselves. In the person of Jesus, who is the image of God, we see and know God. In the light of his truth, we see and know ourselves. Without the faith of Christ, we know neither; but are in total darkness to both. By believing the gospel, we know Christ, and commence disciples of him. We know his love, taste his grace, rejoice in his salvation, and give him the glory which is due unto him, as "GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH." 1 Tim. i. 16. Our text presents us with the conduct of Christ's disciples. Let us attend to and consider,

1st. That Jesus is the object of divine adoration and worship, because he is God. And,

2dly. That all his disciples do adore and worship him as such; and therefore those who do not are not disciples of him.

3dly. The nature of those doubts which may exercise his disciples.

O may that dear Saviour, who hung upon the cross, as a man and malefactor, without the gates of Jerusalem, now shine upon our hearts with the glory of his God-head, that we may bow before him, rejoice in him, and give glory to him, as the LORD our God. For,

1st. He is the object of divine adoration and worship, because he is God. It is impossible to believe our bibles, without being confirmed in this capital, this fundamental truth of Christianity. It runs through the whole scriptures, from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelations. Had we but this one text, it is fully sufficient to establish our minds in this important truth,—“Concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all,

God blessed for evermore," Amen. Rom. ix. 5. Indeed the scriptures are written, not to testify of, and display the essence and existence of the Godhead, absolutely and abstractedly considered; so as to lead men into vain, idle, and fruitless speculations concerning Deity; but to manifest and make God known, in his love and grace to sinners, and the relation he stands in to them, as a FATHER, SAVIOUR, and SANCTIFIER. Hence, God can only be known to us guilty creatures, as he is in Christ, "reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." 2 Cor. v. 19. There is none other but he. If we see not God in Christ, but see God out of Christ, we are forming a mere idol in our evil imagination, "and are atheists without God in the world." Ephes. ii. 12. "For the world by wisdom knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21. But the scriptures reveal him to us in Christ, in the most engaging, endearing, and precious relation, as that God who purchased the church with his blood. Acts xx. 28. And again, "Thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name." Isaiah liv. 5. Now who shed his blood for, and purchased the church with his blood? Christ and no other. Therefore Christ is God. Who is our Maker? "All things were made by Christ, and without him was not any thing made which is made." John i. 3. Therefore Christ is God. Who is our husband? "Ye are married to him who was raised from the dead." Rom. vii. 4. "I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor. ii. 3. Therefore Christ is our husband: he is the LORD of hosts. This is our faith, and therefore we worship Christ, as the living and true God. But,

Secondly, We have not only the scriptures to warrant, but examples to confirm us in this. These first disciples of Christ, when they saw him, risen again from the dead, they worshipped him, they adored him, as the Lord their God. If we deny this, we instantly make these disciples a set of vile idolaters. Yea more, Christ himself, so far from being a great prophet, and a good man, as his pretended friends, but avowed enemies, to his proper and essential God-head, say of him, that he must be as far from true goodness, and real humility, and possessed with an equal degree of daring pride, and assuming arrogance, as Mahomet, or any other notorious impostor, to suffer this.—For would any great prophet, or good man, ever suffer his fellow creatures to ascribe divine honours to him, by worshipping and adoring him? No: His very soul would be fired with jealousy, for the honour and glory of his God; and he would reject, with the utmost indignation and abhorrence, the very attempt. We have instances of this. Cornelius fell down at Peter's feet to worship him; but Peter said unto him, "See thou do it not, I also am a man." Acts x. 26. When the beloved disciple saw the

glory of an angel, and was told of glorious things by him, says he, "I fell at his feet to worship him, but he said unto me, see thou do it not. I am thy fellow-servant, &c. worship God." Rev. xix. 10. Hence we see all worship is due to God only. But these disciples worshipped Jesus, and he suffered it; therefore Jesus is the true God, the object of divine adoration.

If not, surely, now he was taking his last farewell of, and blessing these his beloved disciples, he would never have been so treacherous to them, as to abandon them to the abominable sin of idolatry. And, as he was just going to ascend to his Father, surely, he would have been so jealous of his honour and glory, as not to suffer them to give that worship to him, which is incommunicably due to God only. Verily, if Jesus were only a mere man, a good man, surely he would have possessed the honesty of Peter, and the humility of the angel, and when these disciples offered to worship him, he would have rejected it and said, See you do it not: I also am a man, your fellow servant; and not God. But he did not. He as their Lord, and their God, accepted their worship, as due unto him. So every one who knows Christ, believes in him, and becomes a disciple of him, will esteem him worthy of the love and adoration of their hearts, as the great God and their Saviour.

But why? Because they honour him, by simply believing in their hearts, the words which he spake. For, he says, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: He who honoureth not the Son, [by believing his eternal power and essential God-head, and not worshipping him as the living and true God] honoureth not the Father who sent him." John v. 23. "I and my Father are one." John x. 30. One in nature, essence, glory, perfection and power. Hence he says, "If ye love ME, keep MY commandments." John xiv. 15. Who has authority to give commandments, and require a creature to keep them, but God? But Jesus doth this. Therefore he is God: that very God who says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, &c." Deut. vi. 5.

The unity of Deity, as it exists in a Trinity of persons, called the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST, 1 John v. 7, is as clearly and expressly revealed in the scriptures, as that there is one God. Therefore, this is not a mystery, but a manifest and open truth, which demands our faith. Hence the church of England, most scripturally and judiciously, thus expresses our faith, upon the feast of Trinity, "That which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son; and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality." For they are the ONE Jehovah, constantly spoken of throughout the scriptures of truth.

But, as to the essence of the God-head of the Father, of

the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, how, and in what manner it exists in a Trinity of persons, this is not revealed to us, nor can it be explained by us, therefore will ever remain a mystery unto us. Here we are to be content, and not aim to be wise above what is written, but take up the humble words of the poet,

Where reason fails with all her pow'rs,
There faith believes, and love adores.

Would we see an epitome of true Christianity, and of the knowledge, understanding, and experience of every true disciple of Christ? Here it is. St. John concludes his precious epistle with it. "We know that the Son of God is come." How? From the external evidence of the scriptures only? No. But we know it also, by an internal proof. For, "He hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, [that is the living and true God in Jesus Christ. "For the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father." John xvii. 21. "No one can know the Father, unless the Son reveal him." Matth. xi. 27. "No one can come to the Father, but through the flesh, or humanity of the Son." Heb. x. 20. [This we understand and know.] "And we are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is [even Jesus Christ, the Son of God] the true God, and eternal life." And, as though he decried all other objects, which men set up and pretend to worship beside him, as idols, he adds, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." 1 John v. 20, 21. And, in the preceding verse, he scruples not to affirm of all who do not thus know, understand, and believe in the Son of God, "That they are of the whole world, which lieth in wickedness," or in the wicked one. Against all such, there is one of the most awful, and dreadful denunciations in all scripture, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha," cursed with the most dreadful curse, till Christ cometh. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. But why so severe? Because God manifested the greatest love to sinners, which he possibly could, in sending his beloved Son to save them; and therefore to reject, despise, set Christ at nought, and refuse to honour him, is the greatest indignity and affront, that a creature can possibly be guilty of, against God. Want of affection to Christ, proceeds from wilful ignorance, and obstinate unbelief of the scriptures, which testify of him. All who live and die in this state, live under the curse of the law, and the dominion of sin, and will die under the wrath of God, which is due to sin. For this is the solemn, the irrevocable decree of the Judge of all flesh, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. Hence we see the great importance

of being a disciple of Christ, believing in him, and worshipping of him as our God and Saviour. A sinner's affection to Christ, is the turning point of Christianity. This affection, arises from an understanding to know him. This he gives us. From this springs all real devotion of heart to him, and all true worship of him. This gift of understanding to know him, is an incontestible proof to us, that he is the LORD our God, and therefore we adore and worship him. For, who but Jehovah, could give us, whose "understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart," an understanding to know him, believe in, worship and adore him, and set our affections on him? Therefore this is his covenant promise, "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." Jerem. xxiv. 27. Now let me ask any convinced, enlightened sinner, what was the first object presented to his mind to return to, and seek relief for his distressed conscience, and to save his guilty soul? Was it not the Lord Jesus Christ? Did not his whole heart go out after him? and was it not the earnest cry of his soul? Save, Lord Jesus, or I perish! Did Jesus hear his cry, and help him? Did he find peace in his blood, pardon in his redemption, justification in his righteousness, and comfort in his salvation? Is it any marvel then, that such a sinner should exalt, glorify, honour and adore the Son of God, with the supreme love of his heart, and worship him with all the affections of his soul? Thus from an understanding given us by Christ, we return unto him with our whole hearts, as the Lord Jehovah, the self-existing God. But is not this suggested to your mind? Does not this worshipping of Christ as God, derogate from the honour and glory of God the Father? Far from it. For it is the Father's will, to his glory, and is his delight. For "when he bringeth his only begotten Son into the world, he saith, let all the angels of God worship him." And to the Son he saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," &c. Heb. i. 6, 8. Now if the Father calls the Son, God: if he says his throne is for ever and ever; if he commands all the angels of God to worship him, surely poor sinners who are redeemed, justified, and saved by him, in his incarnate state, as God and man in one Christ, have all reason, and the most sufficient authority to worship him. Therefore this point must be settled, beyond a doubt, in every heart that believes the word of God, and in Christ as revealed by it. Let us now,

Thirdly, Consider the doubts of Christ's disciples. Our Lord, after his resurrection, meets his disciples upon a mountain, where he had appointed them. It is supposed that St.

Paul alludes to this, when he says, "Christ was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." 1 Cor. xv. 6. "But some doubted." This is not to be understood of the apostles, but of some of the disciples, who doubted at first, but were afterwards fully convinced of the truth of our Lord's resurrection, and therefore worshiped him. Let us make an observation or two on the nature of doubting.

1st. When we doubt of the truth of any scripture doctrine, our minds hang in suspense, like a pair of even scales, without preponderating to either side. The truth we cannot, dare not give up, because it is so well authenticated; but yet, through the weakness of our faith, and through our natural proneness to unbelief, doubts arise in our minds, which prevent our enjoying the comfort contained in the truths of the gospel, particularly in that of our Lord's resurrection. Now this is the case with many of Christ's disciples. But this doth not arise from any defect in the revelation of it, or for want of evidence to confirm it; for no truth in all the world can possibly be more clearly revealed, nor more stronger attested. Why then do we ever doubt? because of our natural inattention to, and unaptness to credit divine truths. And yet to doubt of this, or any other truth concerning Jesus, is very dishonouring to him, and very injurious to the peace and comfort of our own souls. Yea, to indulge doubts here is sinful. For, it is calling in question the truth of scriptures, and the veracity of the Spirit of truth, and inspirer of them. Doubting concerning the resurrection of Christ, will prevent joyful worshipping of him. This was the fault of Thomas. He indulged his doubts. Though the strongest evidence was given him, yet he refused it. He would not be satisfied, without sense and feeling. This was criminal. Yet Christ indulged him with it. But he reproved him. So he did Peter, with, "O thou of little faith! wherefore dost thou doubt?" Matth. xiv. 31. Now, in both these instances, it is most plain, that they consulted flesh and blood, and listened to carnal reasonings. These weaken faith, and strengthen doubting. These we are to oppose and resist, as contrary to faith, enemies to comfort. And, as the word of God begets faith, so it is the best antidote against doubting. Therefore, search the word more diligently, read it more attentively, pray more earnestly for the grace of the Spirit, and you will doubt less. A sight of Christ by the eye of faith, will chase doubts from the mind, as the sun does mists and vapours from the earth. But he is nowhere to be thus seen, but in the scriptures. "These, says he, testify of me, therefore he commands, search them." John v. 39. If you disobey his word, marvel not if doubts prevail.

2dly. But say many, "We have no doubt of the truth as it is in Jesus, nor of his resurrection, but of our own interest in

his love and salvation." This we are perfectly assured of, Christ loves all who believe in, and follow him. And all such may be sure, that they are interested in his salvation. Their faith to believe on him, repentance to turn to him, obedience in following of him, their prayers unto him, their desires after him, and delight in the knowledge, worship, and enjoyment of communion with him, are sure evidences of their interest in him. For all these flow from the love of his heart to them, and the grace of his Spirit in them. And, that blessed Spirit, who implanteth these graces, however weak they may be in their experience at present, will most assuredly strengthen them; and in his own time, fill their souls with all joy and peace in believing, and bear witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God. Therefore remember our Lord's word, to the once doubting Thomas, "Be not faithless, but believing." John xx. 27. Check all your doubts with, thus it is written. Amidst all your doubts, hang upon your Lord's word. Be simple of heart, as a little child before him. Cleave stedfastly to his truth. Dwell constantly on his love. Obey daily his command. "Abide in me." John xv. 4. Comfort your heart with this his precious promise, "He that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12. If so, then suffer one word of

REPROOF.

Though we do well with David to chide our souls with "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?" Psalm xliii. 5. Yet, have we not reason also to chide ourselves, for not closely following Christ? Ah! my dear friends, is not this the chief cause of all our doubts, fears, and misgivings of heart? If we do not quite forsake Christ, yet do we not too, too often, like Peter, "Follow him afar off?" Luke xxii. 54. Awful effects followed upon poor Peter. Remember him, and tremble at this. For by such conduct, we lose the light of life, the joy of hope, and the comfort of love; and get into darkness, doubt, and distress of soul. Remember, no longer than while we are following Christ, can we enjoy the light of life. And what, I pray, is to be put in competition with this? Or for what, would you part with the enjoyment of Christ, who is our light, life, peace, and joy? As there are many things, which naturally tend to weaken our faith, cloud our minds, darken our souls, deject our spirits, and fill us with doubts, concerning our interest in Christ, all these are to be carefully watched against, and constantly avoided. Thus we shall act, if we are really in earnest to enjoy Christ. So there are many means to be used, which have a spiritual tendency to strengthen our faith, enlighten our

minds, animate our souls, enliven our spirits, chase away our doubts, and fill us with joy and peace in believing. These, if we have chose Christ, if our affections are set upon him, and if the sense of his presence, and enjoyment of him, is our heaven upon earth, we shall constantly be found in the use of : looking to Jesus in all, expecting to find him by all, praying him through all, to be more and more precious to us, that we may be more and more fully assured of his love to us, and of our interest in him; so that we may be able to say, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." 1 John iii. 24.

A COLLECT.

LORD JESUS, give us a heart ever to know, confess, and worship thee, as our **LORD**, and our God; the God of our salvation, by whom we escape death, in whom we are perfectly righteous, and who will give unto us, the crown of everlasting life. Lord deliver us from guilty fears, and unreasonable doubts. O send thy holy Spirit into our hearts to testify of thee, thy free grace, and finished salvation for us miserable sinners; and of thy Father's love to us, in thee, that we may enjoy his peace, which passeth all understanding. O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, be thus gracious to us, that we may live in the love of God, abide in the grace of Christ, and walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and have perfect victory over sin, death, and hell, to the honour and glory of thy name, O **LORD**. Amen.

The Twenty-fifth Lord's Day.

THE LORD'S CALL TO SLEEPING PROFESSORS.

Wherefore he saith, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light," Ephes. v. 14.

WHO saith this? The Spirit of Christ, who spake by the prophets and apostles. Unto whom doth he thus speak? Not to those who are dead in trespasses and sins; but to those whom he had quickened to spiritual life. They were not dead, but asleep among the dead. They were not wholly without spiritual life, but they enjoyed not the comfort of spiritual light. There were such sleeping professors in the church of old. Hence the prophet calls on them, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Isai. lx. 1. And the same Spirit, calls upon such sort of persons by the apostle in the gospel church, "Awake thou that sleepest," &c. Thus the Spirit executes his office, by testifying of Christ, and glorifying him. And he manifests his love to, and care for the redeemed of the Lord, first in quickening them to believe in Christ, and after when they get into dull, heavy, drowsy, sleeping frames, in calling upon them, and directing them to Christ, that they may not sleep in darkness, but may enjoy Christ who is the light of life.

Therefore these words stand on sacred record, are suitable for, and addressed to such professors now. Where is the believer in Christ, who is not at times overtaken with sleepy fits, and dead frames, so as not to need this call, to awake, arise, and go to Christ, for light to cheer his spirits, and animate his soul? See then the love of the Spirit, and what concern he has for the frames of Christ's members, that they may glorify him, by enjoying light, lively, comfortable frames of soul in and from him. It is a very bad sign, when professors can be content with sleepy, dry, barren frames of soul; or can speak lightly and irreverently of lightsome, joyous, comfortable frames and feelings through the enjoyment of Christ. Is not this to slight precious Christ, and the warming, cheering, enlivening, invigorating rays, which he, as the sun of righteousness, sheds upon his people? Is not this to grieve the Spirit the comforter, and to do despite unto him who sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, and fills us with all joy and peace in believing? O may the Lord give us a right judgment in all things. Let us consider,

1st. The nature and evil of this sleep here spoken of.

2dly. The call, and necessity of awaking and arising from it.

3dly. The precious promise which encourages to this. May the Lord the Spirit, cause us to feel his quickening power, and to experience his enlivening influence, while we are attending to these things.

1st. The nature and evil of this sleep. Though this spiritual sleep is compared to natural, yet it very widely differs from it, in this particular. The body requires rest, and cannot subsist without sleep. For it is thereby nourished and refreshed, so as to be able to perform the functions of life. "The sleep of the labouring man is sweet." Eccles. v. 12. It is healthful to the body. But not so is spiritual sleep to the soul. No. It is injurious and dangerous. For it consists in supineness, indolence, and stupidity. We have a striking description of this sleep. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" The voice of wisdom thus interrogates the sleeping professor, and he thus replies, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." Ah! this little, little, little, is attended with great, very great danger. For, "so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, [suddenly and unexpectedly] and thy want as an armed man," irresistibly and unavoidably. Prov. vi. 9, &c. How many professors have found the woful experience of this in their spirits? This proceeds from spiritual sloth in the ways of the Lord. For, "slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep." Prov. xix. 15. When sloth hath begot deep sleep, sleep nourishes sloth. And, when a professor gets into a deep sleep of soul, he then lies down, with the spiritually dead, fearless of enemies, thoughtless of dangers, and forgetful of his best friend, his gracious Saviour and his God. Yea, he, grows supine, indolent, and regardless of the joys, delights, and comforts, of the day of his espousals. For, though the spirit sleeps, as to any lively affections to God, keen appetite to feed on the love of Christ, warm zeal for his glory, vigorous exertions of grace, and delight in the discharge of duty; though all these may be dormant, in the lethargic soul, yet the form of these may be attended to and kept up, while the professor is all life, liveliness, and activity in the affairs of time and sense. Yea now, he can cast in his lot with the ungodly, who are dead in sin, like their company, be pleased with their vain diversions, enjoy their sensual pleasures, and be ready to accost such with, "Hail brother, well met. I have put off my coat. I am not so precise as I once was, when under legal bondage. Now I am got into gospel liberty. I am not so squeamish as I was about trifling things. I have cast off that heavy gloom, and stiff reservedness, and can comfortably enjoy my friend in his

own way." Do not the life and conduct of many professors, loudly proclaim thus?

Let me speak plainly and faithfully a word to professors, yea, to my own soul also. Art thou asleep or awake? lying down or standing up? slumbering or walking? How is it with us? Are we like the foolish virgins, slumbering and sleeping? Or have we left our first love, and fallen back again into the arms and embraces of that bewitching harlot, the world? Has this present world got the ascendancy over our affections? Do we dream of pleasures in it, and happiness from it? Are our hearts overcharged with the cares of this life, which, like an intoxicating draught, has cast our souls into a stupid frame, and brought on a benumbing slumber, so that we can neither see things as they really are, nor judge of them according to their true nature, nor real importance? Are we so lying down, so loving to slumber, that we cannot see Christ in his preciousness, truth in its amiableness, nor feel the sweetness, power, comfort and influence of them, as we once did, when we were broad awake, and the candle of the Lord shone upon our heads? Is duty a burden? Are privileges a task? Are ordinances irksome to us? Do the pleasant ways of the Lord seem rugged? Are his precious paths of peace tiresome? Are we ready to think, what weariness is it to serve the Lord? What profit is there in waiting upon him, praying unto him, and attending upon his ordinances? Are these things so? If they are, verily we are fallen asleep: our souls are fallen into a deep slumber. A lethargic stupidity has seized us. Let each of us examine our own souls.

Are we quite easy and unconcerned, or are we restless and dissatisfied with ourselves? Art thou saying, all is well now: all will be well at the last? Verily, if so, thou art dreaming. Yea, thou talkest wildly in thy sleep. What meanest thou, O sleeper! What! all well now, without the light of life, the comfort of love, and the joy of salvation! Will all be well when death pays thee a visit, shakes his dart at thee, and shews thee that thy sands are well nigh run out, and gives thee these alarming hints, that he shall soon bring his commission to seize thee as his prisoner, and carry thee to thy prison-house the grave? Canst thou meditate on his coming with composure, receive his call with pleasure, and wait for him with joy? No. Thou knowest thou canst not, if thou has left thy beloved, and his presence is departed from thee. But, art thou sensible of this, restless in soul, and distressed in mind for this? Though sloth and sleep have robbed thee of the comfortable enjoyment of him, yet in the anguish of thy mind, art thou bewailing thy folly, and mournfully asking, "Will the Lord cast off for ever: and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for

ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? O wretch that I am, to sleep when I should have watched; to forsake my beloved, instead of following him. Now, I fear he hath quite forgotten, and for ever forsaken me." Is this thy language? Dost thou know thou deservest to be thus treated? Wretch as thou art: wretch as I am, hell-deserving wretches as we all are, yet our Lord rests in his love to us. Therefore the power of his Spirit and Grace stirs motions and desires in our hearts towards him, and causes us to be ashamed of our treatment of him. These indicate that he has not left us to the sleep of death. For though asleep, yea though lying down among the dead in sin, yet, behold, here is his voice of sovereign grace, which sounds from his sacred word. Awake. Arise. Awake from sleep. Arise from the dead. We come,

Secondly, To consider this call, and the necessity of awaking and arising. (1st.) It is a call of love. O what love is here! Well might Paul say, "The love of Christ passeth knowledge." Ephes. iii. 19. And that "nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 39. The love of his heart, is proclaimed by the Spirit, in his word. Who is this loving call addressed to? Even those who are guilty of the most base, unloving, provoking behaviour to Christ, the most loving Bridegroom. He finds them fast asleep in the embraces of a vile harlot, and in company with those who are ignorant of him and at enmity against him. And yet, instead of awaking them, with the loud and terrible thunder of his wrath, and calling them forth to hear their dreadful, decisive doom, Depart, ye cursed, into the damnation of Hell. Lo, he uttereth his loving voice in a compassionate call. Awake O soul. Thy beloved calls. Open thine eyes. Look around thee. See where thou art: sleeping upon enchanted ground: in the midst of thine enemies, and surrounded with dangers. Ah! who against such love is proof!

2dly. It is a call of reproof. Awake thou that sleepest, and see what thou hast lost by thy sleeping. The comfort of faith, the joy of hope, the enjoyment of love, and the roll of thy assurance out of thy bosom, which heretofore thou didst read with a rapture of delight. Let not thine eyes be any longer closed to thy loss, but open them, feel and bewail it, and cry for restoration of former comforts. Love chides. Thy reproving Lord, would have thee happy in his love. "The scripture is profitable for reproof." 2 Tim. iii. 16. "He that regardeth reproof, shall be honoured," Prov. xiii. 18, with his Lord's presence, peace, love, and joy. "And he that hateth reproof shall die." Prov. xv. 10. Die in his sin and folly, because he hated the voice of love.

3dly. It is an inviting call from the Spirit of Christ, to our sleeping spirits, to arise from the dead, and go to Christ. The Comforter invites, that comforts may be enjoyed. Are you comfortable with the dead, in your dead frames, and dark state? You cannot. If you say you are, you will slight the invitation, and reject the counsel. If you do, you will surely lament your conduct, and rue your folly. How does this call of invitation affect you? Consider from whom it comes. The Glorifier of Christ, and the Comforter of sinners. Consider to whom it is addressed, even to you and me, who are naturally prone to seek rest out of Christ, to lie down and sleep among dead sinners, in dead frames, to his dishonour, and our soul's distress and danger. Consider the design of the invitation; it is to go to Christ, to find comfort, peace, and joy in him. Therefore, your excuses are your miseries, Your delays are dangerous. Your sleeping, distracting and distressing. And if this loving, reproving, inviting call be rejected, who knows but your sleeping may prove damning? It is an awful thing to reject the invitations of love, and say to our soul, Sleep on and take thine ease. How many such fools has God surprised in their airy visions, and golden dreams, with "This night is thy soul required of thee." But I will add,

4thly. It is an effectual call, to all who are made wise unto salvation. For the Spirit not only calls by the letter of his word, but he speaks to the heart, in his power and energy. True, the five virgins slumbered and slept, as well as the foolish. Shame on them for it. For they would have slept their last, and the door would have been shut against them, as well as the others, if they had been left to themselves. But that was impossible. For, "Behold he who keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep." Psalm cxxi. 4. Though his people may slumber and sleep, yet the Lord keepeth them, therefore he will arouse and awake them. For "He keeps them by his power, through faith unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. Therefore, gracious words shall sovereignly effect gracious purposes upon gracious hearts. If you are one of these, you will hear the Lord's call, obey his voice, arise from the dead, and go to Christ.

Thirdly, We are to consider the precious promise which encourages to this. "Christ shall give thee light." Shall! My mind was greatly struck in transcribing this word *shall*. O there is very much contained in it! Methinks I could dwell long, and say much about it. One word shall suffice. It is absolute and peremptory. Christ **SHALL**. Why so? Because it is his covenant office. He is anointed, and appointed to it. He has undertaken and engaged, and therefore is bound, by his grace and truth to effect it. O how much of the com-

fort of God's word, do those lose, who reject his everlasting covenant, are blind to its existence, and know not, that it is ordered in ALL THINGS, and sure to all the seed ! But to proceed, "Christ shall give thee light."

When the soul begins to awake from its sleep, and arise from the dead, it is ready to cry out, good Lord, where have I been ? What have I been doing ? Where am I ? It is midnight darkness with my soul : Surely, the Philistines have come upon me, and have put out my eyes. My vile lusts, cursed sins, and base companions, have robbed me of the light of life. What will become of me ? What indeed, if there were no Saviour to go to, nor no light to be received from him. But, glory to him, he says, "I am the light of the world : he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12. What the sun is in the natural world, that Christ is in the spiritual. We have not one single ray of light, but what flows from the sun. Without the sun, we should be in total darkness. How dreadful, uncomfortable, and deplorable must life be under such a circumstance ! But this would not at all affect those who are stark blind, only those who have sight. Just so it is with Christ. We have not a ray of spiritual light but from him. We are in total darkness without him. And darkness is only felt and deplored by those who have spiritual sight. Is this your case ? Do you know and see, your want of light from Christ every day ? Do you know your loss of it, and go to, and call upon Christ to give it you ? If so, you are light in the Lord : a child of the light, and of the day. "All things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the light : for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light." Eph. v. 13. You are reprov'd for sleeping. You know your want of light. It is made manifest to you, that Christ is the light of men, and that he will give light. Therefore he hath called you out of nature's darkness, into his marvellous light.

But, what is implied by that light which Christ will give ?

1st. The light and clear knowledge of our interest in his love and salvation. Sleeping, and lying down among dead sinners, and formal professors, will either keep the soul from enjoying this : or, if experienced, will deprive them of the comfort of it. Though the language of believers, both in the Old and New Testament, fully evince that they enjoyed this light of assurance ; and when deprived of it, their sorrows, sighs, and prayers for the restoration of it, witness the same : though Christ promises he will give this light, and bids his disciples "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John xvi. 24. Though there can be no solid satisfaction, nor lasting, settled comfort in the conscience, unless this light and knowledge is enjoyed : yet it is amazing to see how many professors stop

short of it, sleep on easy and contented without it; and to hear the many unscriptural arguments they urge against enjoying of it. Hence it is, that so many are kept, through their prevailing unbelief of God's great and precious promises, from giving all diligence, to attain the full assurance of hope. Hence their souls are in a lean, starved, doubtful, suspicious state from day to day. Though it must be granted, that this full assurance is not of the essence of faith, yet it must enter into, and constitute the joy of faith, and the triumph of the soul. Will Christ give this light? How inexcusable then are we, if we believe it not, go not to him, and pray and wrestle with him to bestow the joy and comfort of it upon us? For,

2dly. It is the light of joy IN the Lord. Joy from what the whole God-head is to us. A FATHER to love, a SON to save, and a SPIRIT to bless, sanctify, and comfort us in Christ. Spiritual joy, is a rational delight and satisfaction of the reasonable soul, arising from the knowledge of its union to God in Christ. This is communicated from Christ, and is enjoyed in the light of scripture truth. It is very different from those raptures and ecstasies, which many talk of, but know not how to account for. When the heart is sensibly depressed with sorrow, the reason of this we know, feel, and are able to give. So when by joy, the heart is elated, or lifted up, by the gracious discoveries which Christ is pleased to make of himself, and the revelations of the love of his Father, which he gives us in his word; thus by his Spirit he illuminates our minds to understand, and so sheds the light of joy upon our souls. Hence, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 11. So that there is no joy in God, but through Christ. But by him, we are filled with all joy. For, not only hath he made an atonement for our sins, not only is this atonement accepted of his Father; but we also have received it, by faith. Therefore, our consciences possess peace, our hearts are lifted up, and filled with joy in God. Though we can give no reason for this joy, as to its nature, yet, "Believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." But why? Because we have light to see, whom we have not seen with our bodily eye, an unseen Jesus. This light from him, and this sight of him, begets love to him, joy in him, and glorying of him. O may it be our sorrow and shame, that we should ever close our eyes to the charms of him! May it ever be the one delight and joy of our souls, to arise and shine, for the light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us; constantly declaring, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. vi. 14.

INFERENCE.

That Christ deals in wisdom, with the people of his love. He does not force his comforts upon them, whether they desire them or not. Nor will he comfort and encourage them, in and under, such ways as are displeasing to him, and such frames as are unworthy of them. Though he has the strongest love in his heart for them, yet he acts with the greatest prudence towards them. Hence he calls them to awake to convict them of their folly of sleeping. He bids them arise, to shew them the necessity of their repentance, and of shaking themselves from the dust of the earth, and leaving their vain company of dead sinners, and to come to him for the light of grace, comfort, and joy, before he will bestow it upon them. Therefore, how much soever Christ loves our souls, he will never bestow his comforts, but in the way of holy obedience to his word. He will bring down by conviction, all whom he lifts up by consolation.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, thou Saviour of sinners, who callest upon us by the word, and makest most precious promises to us by thy grace, stir up our souls to cry to thee for mercy, and not rest satisfied, without the experience of thy light, love, peace, and joy in our hearts. O forgive our sin and folly, in seeking rest in any thing but thee. Lord awaken us by the word, and keep us awake by thy power, that we may be ever looking to thee, abiding in thee, walking worthy of thee, and daily expecting thy coming to receive us to thyself in light and glory, to the honour and praise of thy blessed name, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory in the highest. Amen.

The Twenty-sixth Lord's Day.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO, AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF ENDURING
TO THE END.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any Man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Heb. x. 37, 38.

WE have a saying, "All's well that ends well." Who are like to end well? Only those who begin well, and continue to go on well. What is it to begin well? With believing in Christ. What to go on well? To live upon, and follow Christ. What to end well? To die in the faith of Christ. Such, and only such are the Lord's free-men—his willing servants—his beloved friends on earth, yet a little while, and he will come, and take them to himself in his kingdom of glory, where they shall be for ever free from every sorrow, eternally delivered from every burden, and be in everlasting possession of—What? The full enjoyment of the whole Godhead, and all the bliss and glory, which a heavenly Father, a gracious Redeemer, and a loving Sanctifier can bestow. And is all this for sinners as we are? and to be enjoyed in a little while too? O then what matters it, what we are now, how looked on, how treated, or what we suffer here!

When *Alexander* found *Diogenes* in a tub, he began to dispute with him about liberty, and which enjoyed the freest state: *Alexander* to command the world, or *Diogenes* to be confined to a barrel? the cynic answered, "Thou commandest others, I command myself. I am a servant to the king, but the king is a servant to his slaves, even those lusts and passions which have dominion over him. But I am emperor over those affections, that exercise dominion over thee." Could a heathen say this? Could he say that sin and slavery are inseparable? Blessed be God we really experience, that by the faith of Christ, we enjoy freedom from the dominion of both; and are waiting for the coming of our Lord, when the very being of sin shall be destroyed, and our souls delivered from the prison of the body. Happy day! glorious event! Let us meditate on the coming of Christ—How the just live till he does come—The awfulness of drawing back before his coming. O that while we are thus engaged, the Lord may present to the view of our faith, the reality of eternal things, so as suitably to affect our minds, and influence our conduct thereby. Let us consider,

First, The coming of Christ. "He shall come—he will

come—he will not tarry—yet a little while, and he shall come.” O there is precious music, joyful harmony in each of these sentences, enough to make every saved sinner’s heart leap for joy! yea, to make his imprisoned soul long to go forth to meet him. For this blessed *he*, is that precious Christ, whom the prophet Habakkuk foretold “should surely come and not tarry.” No, not one moment beyond the period fixed in the eternal council. For in the fulness of time, God the Father sent forth his beloved Son. He who shall come, has come in our nature, lived and died in that nature, atoned for sin, fulfilled the law, brought in righteousness, satisfied justice, wrought out salvation, rose again from the dead, and has carried our nature up to heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. And in that same nature he will come again from heaven. “And unto all them who look for him, he shall appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.” Heb. ix. 24. A second appearing, must imply a first. Looking for Christ implies knowledge of him, delight in him, expectations from him, and joy to see him. Why? Because he has appeared to us in the view of faith in the word, as suited to our state and wants, the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. To all who thus look to him, he shall come. And we want him to come to us every day.

(1st.) In his Spirit, by his word, to strengthen under our weakness, support us under our trials, animate us against our enemies, comfort us under our sorrows, relieve us under our fears, dispel our doubts, enliven our frames, subdue our corruptions, bruise satan under our feet, cleanse us from guilt, purify our hearts by faith, and cause our souls to glory of him and rejoice in his salvation. To you who sigh, groan, and pray for all this, Christ shall come. His love promises. His word engages. His faithfulness and truth compel him to come. He **SHALL** come. Yea, in a little while too. O this little while is a precious word, for faith to stay itself upon. When our Lord was about to leave the world, and go to his Father, he said to his disciples, “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me.” But they could not understand him. They reasoned about this “little while. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said a little while?” John xvi. 16, &c. And he explained the whole matter unto them.

Here we have, (1st.) A full proof, that though Christ was present with them as perfect man, yet that he was also the omniscient God. He knew their private thoughts, secret whisperings, and inward desires. And, (2dly.) Of his tender love and compassion to his weak, ignorant disciples, in resolving

their doubts, and instructing their minds in the things concerning himself and their salvation. And, (3dly.) That Christ is the same to day, as he was yesterday: the same in his knowledge as God, to know all our straits and difficulties of mind, body or estate. The same in his love to feel for us, and be touched with a sympathy with us under them. And the same in his wisdom and power, to teach and instruct us; and therefore he will come, in his Spirit and by his word, to our souls, while we are sojourning through this wilderness, to the promised land. Happy those, who are daily, yea, constantly looking for this spiritual coming of their Lord to revive, refresh, and comfort their souls, crying with David, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" Psalm ci. 2. And with the church, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Song iv. 16. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. He shall come,—he will come,—he will not tarry.—Yet a little while, and he will come. Though to our impatient minds, he may seem to tarry; and we may be ready to say, My Lord delays. Why are his chariot wheels so long in coming? Yet wait thou on the Lord. For, "Blessed are all they who wait for him." Isai. xxx. 18. Yea, wait, and in waiting, learn to practise that blessed, precious art, which the church had acquired when she says, "I will wait upon the LORD, who hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." Isai. viii. 17.

Ah, my dear friends! ye followers of the Lamb, ye do not enough consider, that as sure as ye are partakers of precious faith, the Lord will try your faith, and prove whether you really do love him in truth, and can trust him in sincerity. If you do, you will mourn his absence: wait, and long for his coming; rely upon his word of promise, and obey his commands, till he does come. I have seen an affectionate parent, to try the behaviour of its beloved offspring, hide away from it. When the dear little one found that it had lost sight of its beloved object, it has turned its wishful eyes around, and if it could not perceive its dear parent, its little breast has began to heave, and its sorrowful tears would soon proclaim its loss. Give it what you would it would reject all with disdain, and be satisfied with nothing, till the presence of the object of its heart was enjoyed. O that we had ever such simple love to Christ! and yet attempted with such strong faith in the word of his love to us, that whenever he hides away his face, we might never doubt of his love, nor intermit in our obedience to them, waiting upon him, and expecting the coming of him to bless and comfort us. This is the glory of faith. Thus it glorifies Christ, its author and finisher, by trusting in, and staying ourselves upon the sure word of our Lord, who shall come: Who will

come, and will not tarry one moment longer than the fittest, and best season, for his own glory, and his dear people's good. But,

2dly. There is another coming of Christ, which our text leads us to consider. For yet a little while, and he shall come, to put an end to all our troubles, fears, and sorrows, by his faithful messenger, death. In what a variety of shapes does he appear, and execute his commission upon the children of men? What dreadful havock, is he daily making upon the earth? He comes with an eternal curse to all, who are out of Christ, unreconciled to God. Their sins are upon them. He cuts them down in their sins: and they perish everlastingly under the wages of sin, death eternal. Well, indeed, may such hate the thoughts of death, abhor the conversing of him, and tremble at the most distant view of his approach. For they see not Christ in death. They know not his victory over death. Therefore they fall victims to, and are eternally conquered, by this grim tyrant, this grisly monster, death.

But to you, unto whose hearts Christ hath come, in the power of his Spirit, by his word, he will come in death, and with death, to support you in that trying season, to comfort and relieve you, under all your doubts and fears, and to animate you with courage, by confidence in him, in his word, in his grace, victory and triumph over death, and all the powers of darkness. But says a fearing, trembling, doubting soul, "Are we sure of this? I cannot think of death, but I am filled with fears, how I shall behave in a dying hour. Were I sure to find the Lord's presence with me in that solemn season, I should lift up my head with joy, and fear no evil." Nothing but faith will do here. But what is the warrant and ground of faith? Nothing within ourselves, but the word and promise of Christ without us. Here we are prone to err, not knowing, or not considering the scriptures. Now the word is, "Christ shall come. He will come. He will not tarry. Yet a little while and he will come," by death to take us out of a body of sin, and a world of woe, into his mansions of bliss and glory, where we shall see him as he is, enjoy him where he is, and be for ever with him, eternally to adore, and praise him. For he saith, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." John xiv. 3. This is most comfortable and joyful. Here is your Lord's precious declaration, and sweet promise. Where is your faith? Can you, do you credit his word? If you do, you must be joyful. Yes, but ere we arrive at this, the gulf of death must be shot, the river of death must be passed. Hence our fears, doubts, and dismay. But "Faith makes a bridge across the gulf of death." How? By believing what Christ

was, said, and did on this side the river death; and what he now is, on the other side. While with us, before he passed the river, died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, he declares, as with a most solemn oath, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that keepeth my saying, shall never see death." John viii. 51. What saying? "Even that I am the resurrection and the life. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." John xi. 25, 26. How is this saying to be kept? In the faith of our heart, the memory of our minds, the register of our conscience, and the hope of our souls. If so, we shall never see death, see death in its terror, wrath, and curse. We shall see his face changed from that of a terrible monster, and dreadful enemy, into the pleasing countenance of a messenger of love, an angel of peace, a harbinger of joy." "We shall never die." But living upon the word of Jesus, we shall escape death, sing victory in dying, and shout triumph over death, with, O death, where is thy sting! I feel it not. O grave where is thy victory! I am insensible of it. For I am more than conqueror, through Christ who loved me. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And by beholding Jesus standing on the other side the river death, as "Able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25. Thus our bridge of faith is complete, safe, secure, and comfortable, to pass over the river death, to the fullest enjoyment of our Saviour. But here I recal my thoughts. I have really prevented my design: and am anticipating what was proposed,

Secondly, To consider, how the just shall live, till Christ doth come. The just. Who are they? Those who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and reject the imputed righteousness of Christ? These are Pharisees, who are dead in their sins, and only alive in self-righteous hopes, and false confidences. The just, are those who are justified by God, and made righteous in the righteousness of Christ,—who have believed on him,—fled to him,—taken refuge in him,—and find shelter from him, against all the threats of law and justice, and are dead to any hope in themselves, and any reliance upon their own righteousness. These just, or justified ones shall live by faith. This is quite opposite to living by sense. Faith triumphs over sense, and carries the soul out above, and beyond nature and sense. Such live, not upon their faith, nor frames and feelings, but *by* their faith. *By* what their faith brings into their heart and conscience, to nourish the one, and comfort the other, from the word of God the Father's love, the word of God the Son's grace and salvation, and the word of the Spirit's inspiring, teaching, and applying. Thus the just

shall live, "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD;" Jehovah, in all his persons, promises, mercy, love and favour. Deut viii. 3. It is said of Esau, that he was "A cunning nunter, a man of the field." Gen. xxv. 27; and xxvii. 40. So God's just ones are made expert in the word of his truth: they hunt in his sacred pages, and search in the field of the gospel for hid treasure, and they live by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. They feed upon it in their hearts, and their souls are nourished up thereby, unto eternal life. Let us consider in a few particulars, the nature of this life, of living by faith.

1st. It is living upon things, which are out of sight, above sense, and beyond reason. Strange! How then do we attain the knowledge of them, so as to live by them? They are presented to our minds, by the word and Spirit of God, from day to day. Thus the life of faith is maintained. Hence see the absolute necessity of searching the scriptures constantly, in order to go on steadily, walk uprightly, and live comfortably. For, the revelation of God in Christ, by his word, is the object of faith. The loving declarations of his mind, are the food of faith. The precious promises of his grace, and the joy of faith. The history of his dealing with, and faithfulness to his people, are the encouragements of faith. His exhortations quicken faith. His threatenings alarm faith. His holy precepts are the rule of faith. And the person, life, death, atonement, righteousness, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Christ, are the glory of faith. Therefore, as the just live by faith, they live upon the Son of God, who is the author and finisher of their faith, the life of their faith, and the life of their souls. Hence,

2dly. It is an humble, dependent life. The just never get any thing in themselves, wherein to trust, or whereof to glory. No. They are devoted pensioners at a throne of grace, humble suitors to a God of mercy, needy, dependent creatures upon the Saviour's fulness. And they live by mercy they never deserved, by favour they never merited, by a righteousness not their own, to the working out of which they contributed nothing; and hope to enjoy a kingdom of glory, to which they have not the least title or claim, but by free gift, of free promise, from a covenant God. Therefore,

3dly. It is a life of love. Faith works by love. Even by the love of God, manifested in Christ, to our justification, pardon and salvation. This love is the life, nourishment, and spring of faith. It receives this love; is influenced by this love; and the believer's views, ways, and actings, are correspondent to this love. For, as faith brings the knowledge and sense of this love of God to us, into our hearts, so it begets in us in love to him, because he first loved us. And, therefore, while we live by faith,

we cannot continue in any thing which is contrary to love. We believe sin to be contrary to love. But faith worketh by love. Therefore we cannot commit sin. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves; but unto him who died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. v. 14. Therefore, the life of faith, which works by the dying love of Christ to us, is contrary to sin, the life of sin, yea, to all sin. But yet we dare not say, that we or any believer in Christ hath no sin, never doth sin, is perfectly freed from all sin, if we did, we should deceive ourselves. "And the truth will not be in us." 1 John i. 8. But this we will boldly assert, that all sin is contrary to the life of faith. That the life of faith is opposite to all sin. And that while the just are living by faith, walking in love, and exercising their hope on Jesus, they cannot commit sin, they will not continue in any sin. Therefore, it is because we are not living by faith, that we do at any time put forth our hand to iniquity. And whenever we do, it is our folly and shame. And it pains and grieves our souls. And we have nothing to relieve and support us under an afflicting sense of it, but this precious word, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ THE RIGHTEOUS: and he is the propitiation for our sins." 1 John i. 2. Therefore, the life of faith hath continual resource to Christ.

4thly. It is a life of fear. Nay, but is it not the oath of a covenant God? "That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him *without fear*, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Luke i. 74, 75. Yes. But though we are delivered from the fear of all our enemies, yet not from the fear of our best friend, our loving, saving God. For there can be no holiness and righteousness of life, where the loving, filial fear of him is not in the heart. Fear God, and fear nothing else. Therefore, from covenant love the LORD declares, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jerem. xxxii. 40. Though God's perfect love to us casts out that fear which hath torment, 1 John iv. 18; yet, the same love plants and keeps alive in us, a holy, loving fear of departing from him. Therefore, we are ever to cherish this fear; and fear the loss of its influence too. For let faith be ever so strong, love ever so vehement, this fear will ever keep pace with both; and is ever consistent with the highest joy. Part with this fear, faith will decline, love wither, and joy fade away.

5thly. Living by faith, is a life of hope. Faith is the parent of hope. While believing, we shall be hoping. Where faith

lives, hope cannot die. Hope keeps pace with faith; faith animates hope; hope invigorates faith. Both have life and strength from Jesus, and the truth as it is in him. Faith receives the word of truth into the heart, lives by it, and feeds upon it, while hope carries out the soul, in expectation of every future good, farther blessings, and eternal comforts to be enjoyed, as promised by the Lord in his word. Thus hope springs eternal in believing hearts. They are now blest in faith. Greater and fresher blessings are before them in hope. All centre in, all flow from Christ, who is "our hope." 1 Tim. i. 1. Therefore we are looking for his appearing and expecting his coming. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. O may the thoughts of this little while be ever uppermost in our hearts, to deaden us to the things of time and sense, and to quicken and animate us to live more and more by faith, looking at the things which are not seen, but which are eternal. Now the just SHALL live by his faith. His soul shall live, and never die. For the mouth of the Lord hath said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." John xiv. 19. The faith of the just shall not fail. For Christ is the author and finisher of his faith." Heb. xii. 2. Therefore, every believer in Christ may, ought, it is both his bounden duty and exalted privilege, to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." For when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Col. iii. 4. But our text concludes with a most awful declaration. Thus we come

Thirdly to consider. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. A very comforting, and a very alarming word this. Comforting to those who continue in the faith. For it is here implied, that the Lord's soul hath pleasure in them. Alarming to those who draw back from a life of faith on him, for he has no pleasure in them. May this remind us, that God's very soul is concerned in the walk and conduct of professors. Ye justified members of Christ, ye real children of God, fear drawing back in any wise from your dear Saviour, and your loving Father. O tremble at the very thought! Arm your minds, by the word of his grace, the declarations of his mercy, and the promises of his love against it. Drawing back from God, proceeds from high thoughts, and lofty conceits of ourselves, depending upon our own power, relying on our own strength, trusting in our own righteousness, and confiding in our own wisdom. As all this, is contrary to a life of faith in, and dependence upon the Lord: so it causes drawing back from him; and hardens the heart against the loving fear of him. And then, sin gets in, lusts prevail, the love of the world overcomes, its company, ways, works, pleasures, riches and honours, bewitch, and ere we are aware, we are fallen under satan's de-

vices, and got at an awful distance, in heart and affection, from our gracious God. How common is this among professors! instances of it abound daily.

O man, if the grace of God be really in thine heart, that word will harrow up thy very soul, and cause thee to shudder, "The Lord's soul hath no pleasure in thee." Why not? Because thy soul hath no pleasure in him, but hath departed from him, sought other lovers beside him, and is pleased with such things as are contrary to him, his love, grace, and truth. Say, is not this the very height of extreme folly, base ingratitude, devilish pride, and haughty impudence? So sure as the Lord has any love for thee, he will chastise thee severely for this, and so make thee feel the smart and anguish of this, that thou shalt have no ease, no rest of soul, until thou dost return unto him with thy whole heart, saying, in the bitterness and affliction of thy soul, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." Hos. ii. 7. What astonishing mercy! What abounding grace, that the Lord should again receive such souls, who have drawn back from him, when they return unto him! With what tender compassion, what heart-melting language doth he speak of such! "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away." Hosea xiv. 4.

But, if this mercy, love, and grace of the Lord, prove ineffectual to reclaim those who draw back from him: if their ear is deaf to it, their heart hardened against it, if they persist in their folly, continue at a distance from God, and refuse to return unto him, they give most awful evidence, not only that they have drawn back from God, but that he has also forsaken them, and given them up, finally and totally to apostatize from the faith which they professed to have, and the hope which they once seemed to entertain. The scripture is full of woes, against such professors, who, having put their hand to the plough of the gospel, pretended to sow in hope of eternal life; but wishfully looking back to this present evil world, and drawing back from God, have rendered themselves unfit for his kingdom. Of such the apostle declares, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them, than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them, according to the true proverb; 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'" 2 Pet. ii. 20, &c. Hence,

OBSERVE.

1st. That unregenerate men may, through hearing the gospel, obtain such a knowledge of Christ, the way of righteousness, and the hope of eternal life, so as to make a profession of it, be pleased and delighted with it, and escape the pollutions of the world, change their conduct, and alter their practice, through the influence of it; and afterwards draw back from God, turn from the holy commandment, and from following on to know the Lord, and be entangled with, and overcome by the world, its lying vanities, and deceitful snares. This is awful; but is frequently seen by professors. For,

2dly. Their after conduct fully proves, that they were only in their natural state, unchanged, unrenewed, unregenerated, by the word and Spirit of God. The unclean *dog* had put on an outward appearance of a change of nature. The filthy *sow* appeared in the garb of a holy professor. But time, circumstances, and temptations, made it manifest, that they were nothing more than dogs and swine, and therefore returned to their filthy practices, and acted agreeably to their polluted natures; whereas, had they been changed into the sheep of Christ, they would not have done so, but would have heard their shepherd's voice, and followed him.

Lastly. Yet a little while, and shall Christ come? Must we all stand before him? Must every eye see him; that very dear MAN, who hung upon the cross for our sins, rose again for our justification, ascended up to heaven in our nature? How awful! how tremendous the sight! How differently shall we be affected at the sight of him? Those who professed to know him, believe on him, and to be followers of him, but shamefully drew back from, and deserted him, through the love of this world, and for fear of suffering in their name, character, or estate, for him, O how will they bear the frown, how behold the stern countenance of the once-humble, loving Saviour; but now offended, majestic Judge! every sight of him, every look from him, will pierce their soul, as by daggers, with acute pain and anguish. But, O, how will they sustain to hear his tremendous voice proclaim, Depart from me—I know ye not—Ye were ashamed of me and my words; now I, the Son, am come in my glory, I will be ashamed to own you. Go ye cursed. Lord Christ save us, from what may bring on this dreadful doom. But, ye justified ones, who lived by faith, on the Son of God, ye shall see his smiling face with joy: See him, whom having not seen ye loved. O glorious sight! ye shall behold him with unspeakable delight, and say of him, with enraptured souls, There, there is the Son of man, the son of God, who loved me, died for me, called me, saved me, kept me through life. He is now come to receive

me, and glorify me. Shame on me, that I should ever offend him. Praise, eternal praise to his love which forgave all, to his blood which cleansed from all, and to his righteousness which justified from all. O the ineffable joy to hear his gracious lips proclaim, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." Matt. xxv. 34. Let us conclude with some few words of

CONSOLATION.

1st. From the covenant of God. Let us think much of this, and dwell constantly upon it. For it is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, according to the infinite wisdom, eternal love, rich grace, and unfrustratable power of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Hence, all our present blessings entirely spring from it, all our future hopes are firmly secured by it; therefore, our expectations can never be frustrated, nor disappointed. "Are we come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel?" Heb. xii. 24. Let us ever remember, that our thus coming, was through the grace of the covenant, and that we are ever to live upon the fulness of grace, which is in Jesus the mediator of this covenant. For, according to covenant grace, "It pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell in Christ." Col. i. 19. And, "That out of his fulness we should receive, and grace for grace." John i. 16. Now, how may I, a poor, miserable sinner, know whether I am interested in this everlasting covenant, so as to enjoy comfort and consolation from it? Very easily. For, if you partake of the graces of the covenant, such as faith, repentance, hope, love, fear, desire after, delight in Christ, and art looking for the coming of Christ, it is most evident, that Christ hath come to your soul, in the power of his word and Spirit, and that you are interested in the everlasting covenant of the Father's love, the Son's salvation, and the Spirit's grace. Therefore, you, even you, vile as you may be in your own eyes, miserable as you may appear in your own sight, yet you are an heir of promise; and consolation, yea, strong consolation awaits you, from the immutability of God's counsel, confirmed by his oath. Heb. vi. 17. To these look, and be happy. On these live and be joyful. But beware of looking on the graces of the covenant, as conditions of salvation. For, if you do, you will take off your eyes from Jesus the mediator of the covenant, these will supplant him in your heart; and by thus breaking the order of the covenant, you will be deprived of its invaluable comforts, the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the witness of the Spirit. Remember, faith was given you to look to Jesus,

glory of and rejoice in him only. Your repentance is his gift, whereby you turn from every other object, and turn to him alone. Hope is bestowed on you, that your whole soul should hang upon him. Love, that you might be ever happy in him. And so of every other grace, Christ is both the author and object of them, that he might be all in all to us; and we ever joyful in him, as our covenant head and representative.

2dly. From the gospel of the grace of God. Gospel declarations, and gospel promises, are all founded in, and result from covenant love, and are intended to convey consolation to the hearts of us poor sinners. For, says the apostle, "if there be any consolation, it is in Christ." Phil. ii. 1. He is revealed, and held forth in the gospel, as the mediator, head, and surety of the covenant. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John i. 17. Even all the grace of the gospel to make miserable sinners happy; and all the promises of the gospel, which are yea and amen in him, sure and certain to be fulfilled, to make sinners joyful in him. For, Christ is the author of the gospel, the fulfiller of the promises, and the giver, both of grace and glory. O then for our consolation, let us look for precious Christ, in every page of the scriptures: for the Father's love in him, and the Spirit's witness of him, in the law, the prophets, and in the psalms, as well as in the new testament, that we may receive consolation from him, while we are waiting for the coming of him. What makes the scriptures, the whole bible precious to a gracious soul? Because they testify of Christ, and make him precious. If Christ is precious to us, we love the gospel, because we are the happy partakers of like precious faith, with the apostles and primitive Christians. Therefore, we are the called of God, to enjoy the comfort of his gospel, the consolation of his love, of his Spirit, and of his covenant. Let us never take up our bibles without thinking, and that with joy, that here is the revelation of God's everlasting love to us, and of the clear display of the transactions of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, in everlasting covenant for us. Let us begin every sabbath, yea, every day, with thinking and believing, that Christ hath once come to us, in humble form and suffering love, and that yet a little while, and he will come again in his glorious majesty, to receive us to himself, and welcome us into his kingdom. The faith of this will beguile every weary step, conquer every enemy, subdue every lust, overcome the present evil world, and cause us, with every breath, to sing, **MORE THAN CONQUERORS, THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US.**

A COLLECT.

O Son of God, who in the fulness of time didst come to re-

deem us, and in a little while wilt come again to judge us, save, O save us from the blindness of our understanding, the perverseness of our will, the carnality of our nature, and the unbelief of our heart. Cause us daily to look for, and press forward to thy coming. Keep us from turning aside, either to the right hand, or left, and from falling back from thee. Lord, enable us to hold on, hold out, and endure to the end. Daily and deeply convince us, that our days are few, our time short, and our end near. O may we live on thee, abide in thee, and walk worthy of thee, to the honour and glory of thy name, to whom with the Father, and holy Spirit, be equal honour, and everlasting praises, world without end. Amen.

The Twenty-seventh Lord's Day.

—THE GOSPEL,— Mark i. 1.

GOD the Father's glory is manifested in the gospel: GOD the Son's salvation is revealed by the gospel; and GOD the Holy Ghost's sanctifying and comforting influences, are communicated through the gospel. If so, then it is at the peril of our souls, to slight or neglect the gospel, "for it is the power of GOD unto salvation, to every one who believeth," Rom. i. 16. And it will be to the trouble and distress of our souls, "if we pervert the gospel of Christ. Gal. i. 7. What does the word gospel mean? neither more nor less than good news, or glad tidings. Let us read the verse of the text thus, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." What is it to slight or neglect this gospel? It is to turn a deaf ear to it: as though we can do very well without it: as though it brings no such good news, that we stand in any need of: looking on it as an odd relation of things, an idle story, that don't at all concern us, nor are we at all interested in it, or affected by it, and therefore we don't care about it. But why do men thus slight such good news, thus neglect such glad tidings? "because a full soul loatheth an honey comb," Prov. xxvii. 7. What good news is a rich feast to a man who is not hungry? what glad tidings is plenty of drink, to a man who has no thirst? add to this, that all is of free cost, he may eat and drink without money, and without price; still the man is careless about it, he slights and neglects the news, it is neither good, nor glad to him, for he has no appetites to gratify. Thus it is with all men naturally, with respect to the gospel.

2d. What is it to pervert the gospel, or good news of Jesus Christ the Son of GOD? we know what it is to pervert the meaning of words, or to corrupt the sense intended by them. For instance. Should the King send this message to a rebel, sentenced to death; "I will freely come and visit you, pardon you, set you at liberty, and receive you to my presence at court; you shall live, and enjoy great honours there." If this message was to be faithfully delivered, in the very words of the King, it would be like the gospel, glad tidings to this condemned criminal. But, if the person sent with the message, were only to add at the end of it, that little monosyllable IF, and say, IF, you will render yourself worthy of, and deserve such favours, the King will certainly bestow them upon you. Now would not this entirely pervert the meaning of the King's words, and

utterly destroy the glad tidings contained in them? Just so it is to *pervert* the gospel of the grace of God, the good news of his free favour, to condemned malefactors: the glad tidings of full and free salvation by the Son of God, for lost sinners, sentenced by the law to eternal death. It is to foist in some words, to clog it with some terms and conditions whereby its meaning is perverted, and the good news designed by it destroyed.

3. So Paul testifies, there be some who trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. Gospel perverters are soul troublers. Therefore Paul says of such, let him be accursed. Yes, and he repeats it, let him be accursed. Gal. i. 7, 8, 9. O! how awful is this! The Lord make preachers tremble, for fear of perverting the gospel. The Lord deliver us from being perverted, from the truth of the gospel by them. The Lord grant, that we may never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor a shame unto it.

4. But how did these men at Galatia pervert the gospel, and trouble souls? why, we don't hear one word that they were presumptuous Antinomians, who despised personal holiness, and taught men such licentious principles and practices, that they might be safe and happy, though they laid the reins upon the neck of their lusts, indulged their carnal appetites, took their full swing in wickedness, and lived under the dominion of sin. No, they only insisted on this one thing, circumcision. But was not this an institution of God? wherein then was the mighty evil of this? Paul clearly saw, and so may every one who has eyes to see, by the light of truth, that this was neither more nor less, than perverting the gospel of Christ, and destroying the good news it brings to poor sinners. This, and no other, was the gospel which Paul preached, and by which these poor heathens found their consciences relieved, their minds supported, their souls comforted, and their spirits sanctified.

5. "But certain men crept in unawares," Jude 4, for gospel perverters *creep* into houses, or churches, says Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 6, in a sly way and clandestine manner, with fawning and flattery, and under specious pretences of the greatest zeal for God, the greatest love for the law of God; the greatest regard to the interest of morality, and for the spread of holiness: what do they? even pervert the gospel, and destroy its glad tidings, in the hearts of sinners, by charging it with having a direct tendency to promote licentiousness of life; and therefore the sinner must do something, must add some work, some obedience of his own, to the law of God, in order to his being justified before God. Hence these devilish creepers, gospel perverters, and soul troublers, at Galatia, insisted upon submission to circumcision. This, at a stroke,

perverted the gospel of Christ. That circumcision was an institution of God, so much the worse : here lies the art, fallacy, and deception of Satan, and his emissaries against the gospel and its professors. It would not do, it would not answer their end, to set up any thing, whereby to pervert the gospel, but what had a specious shew for the honour of God. Satan is too subtle to be bare-faced here. He hides his cloven foot with God's mantle. He shrouds himself under the disguise of goodness, morality, and holiness. And through a specious shew of zeal for these, he creeps unawares into our hearts, and spoils our simplicity of joy in Christ : and by means of corrupt teachers he eclipses the glory of Christ, and prevents sinners from attending to the glad tidings of the gospel, and from enjoying the comfort of them in their hearts. Thus our minds are in continual danger of being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, by "Satan's transforming himself into an angel of light, and his ministers into ministers of righteousness, 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

6. We ever find this true in experience. Either by a sight of our own goodness, or a sense of our own badness, Satan and his perverters of the gospel, will work upon our corrupt notions, so as to puff us up with pride, or deject us into despondency ; we are prone to think, we are so very bad that the gospel is too good news for us, who see nothing in ourselves worthy of it, that can entitle us to it, or give us an interest in it : so we spoil the comfort of it in our consciences, because we do not look upon Christ as the friend of sinners, and Saviour of the lost, and do not go to him for rest, who invites weary and heavy-laden Sinners. Or else, we perceive so manifest a difference in ourselves, from our former life and conversation, and from the rest of the world which lieth in wickedness, that the wax of pride gets hard in our ears, and we grow deaf to its glad tidings, and hence its sweet, enchanting, enlivening sound, is not like music to our ears, nor does it bring joy to our souls : for we lose sight of Christ, and do not love and prize him, and rejoice in him, as all in all to us. O how ought we to pray to the holy spirit, the guide and nurse of our souls, to keep us in our right mind, to preserve all our faculties in a right state, that we may see, know, hear, and feel, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the exceeding vileness of ourselves as sinners, the exceeding purity of God's law, the exceeding preciousness of the gospel, in all its good news, and glad tidings, of Christ as a most exceeding precious Saviour, who has atoned for our sins, wrought out a righteousness to justify our persons, finished a salvation for our lost souls, and communicates holiness out of his fulness, to make us meet for communion with him here, and the full enjoyment of him in glory ! and all this is freely bestowed on

us, without the least merit or desert in us. O how glorious is the gospel, which brings such good news, such glad tidings, to the ears, and to the hearts, of us who are ungodly, unrighteous and unholy sinners in ourselves! may we receive it in love, maintain it in its purity, enjoy its comforts, and walk under its sanctifying influence, till we see our Lord in heaven. Let us dread to fall from grace, as these foolish Galatians did.

7. We hear much talk of falling from grace. What is meant by it? Paul most clearly tells us: It is to look to, or trust in something else besides Christ, and his one-perfect and everlasting righteousness to justify our souls before God. But you are ready to say, I thought falling from grace, was to fall into sin. So it is. It is falling into pride, one of the greatest sins on earth. For it is the setting up the idol of your own righteousness in opposition to the righteousness of the Son of God: it is trusting to a mere nonentity, a thing of nought, existing only in idea, instead of that glorious righteousness of Christ, which the gospel reveals, and with which God is well pleased. Isai. 42. 21. It is striving to clothe, and adorn our naked souls, with filthy rags, instead of submitting to be clothed with the garment of salvation, the robe of Christ's spotless righteousness. It is to place our trust and confidence in, and reliance upon, what works we have done, or can do, to recommend us to God's favour, and justify us in his sight. This, in a strict and proper sense, is falling from grace: falling away from the hope of the gospel, slighting the good news, of full, free, and everlasting justification, by the righteousness of the Son of God: yea, it is setting it at nought, as though it were insufficient, as not having perfectly fulfilled God's law, satisfied his justice, nor could entitle us to his kingdom, and justify us in his sight, without adding some works, some righteousness of our own, to make it effectual for these purposes. O foolish and unwise! do we thus requite the dear Redeemer, thus undervalue his perfect work, thus slight his all-availing Righteousness! Hence Paul declares, behold I Paul say unto you, (you who profess to hear and believe the glad tidings of the gospel, wherein a righteousness is revealed, which you had not the least hand in working out) that if ye be circumcised, (if ye do any work, or submit to any ordinance, in order to join it to Christ's righteousness, or in the least to recommend you to God, and justify you in his sight, in whole or in part) **CHRIST SHALL PROFIT YOU NOTHING.** I testify again, if you put yourself under the law of works, in any wise, you are a debtor to do the whole law: either to keep it wholly, and fulfil perfectly every jot and tittle of the law, or be damned: for Christ shall profit you nothing. Christ is become of no effect to you: your

conscience is entangled with the yoke of bondage. You are fallen from grace, Gal. v. 1, &c.

For it is the voice of the spirit, the glad tidings of the gospel to proclaim this *one* righteousness for the justification of ungodly sinners. It was the work of Christ's obedience unto death. It was the good pleasure of God the Father to impute it to us, unrighteous sinners. And it is the work of God the Holy Ghost, to bring the comfort of it into the heart and conscience of miserable sinners, for he testifies of this **ONE** righteousness only, and no other. He comforts our souls by this **PERFECT** righteousness, and by no other. Hence Luther, sweetly says, "Do we nothing? do we work nothing, for the obtaining this righteousness? I answer nothing at all. For, this is perfect righteousness, *to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing, of the law, or of works.* But to know and believe this only, that Christ is gone to the Father, and is not now seen: that he sitteth in heaven, at the right hand of his Father, not as a judge, but, "made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption." He is our high priest, intreating for us, and reigning in and over us, by his grace. In this heavenly righteousness, sin can have no place: for there is no law; and where no law is, there can be no transgression. Rom. iv. 15.

This is the gospel, this the good news, these the glad tidings from heaven, to us poor sinners on earth. Of this heavenly news wisdom declares, as cold waters to a thirsty soul: so is good news from a far country. Prov. xxv. 25. O let us read this good *news*, dwell on this good *news*, glory in this good *news*, give the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, the glory of this good *news*, from our hearts, with our lips, and by our lives. For as Luther adds, "seeing then that sin hath here no place, there can be no anguish of conscience, no fear or heaviness. But if there be any fear, or grief of conscience, it is a token that this righteousness is withdrawn, that grace is hidden, that Christ is darkened, and out of sight."

9. Thus having seen what the gospel is, what it is to slight and pervert it, and the comforts enjoyed by it; let us now consider, what effect it has upon those who receive it. For the gospel, this good news is not a dry, barren, notional, unaffecting system. No. As soon conceive of the sun, without light or heat, as to think so. Those who hear and receive the gospel, find it quite otherwise. The words of the gospel they find, by sweet and blessed experience, to be spirit and life, and that it powerfully affects their judgement, and their affections.

(1st.) Their judgment it brings to submit to these glad tidings. They over power and silence all our corrupt reasonings,

and carnal objections, and sweetly bring our judgment to acquiesce with them. Does the gospel proclaim, that salvation is by the purpose of God according to the election of grace ? Rom. xi. 5 ; the judgment receives it as good news, and rejoices in it as glad tidings, well knowing, we could never do any thing to render ourselves worthy of God's choice ; and that if election were not of grace, there could not possibly be any salvation : every sinner must perish in his sins, and be damned for his works. Does the gospel proclaim, God hath chosen us *in Christ*, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, according as he has chosen us *in him*, before the foundation of the world ? Ephes. i. 3, 4. Are we beloved *in Christ*, even with the same everlasting love as God loves Christ ? John xvii. 23. Does God view us in the face of his anointed ? Ps. lxxxiv. 9. Make us accepted in his beloved Son ? Eph. i. 6. Doth he make us righteous in Christ, and justify us *in his righteousness* ? 2 Cor. v. 21. Pardon and cleanse us from all sin in his blood ? 1 John i. 7. Adopt us as children by the faith of Christ ? Gal. iii. 26. Translate us into the kingdom of his dear Son ? Col. i. 13. Sanctify us in the name of the Lord Jesus ? 1 Cor. vi. 11. Keep us by his almighty power through the faith of Christ ? 1 Pet. i. 5. Is it the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, to reign with Christ for ever ? Luke xii. 32. Is all this declared to be, not of works, lest any man should boast ; but of grace, that no man should glory before God ; but that God should have the whole and sole glory ? 1 Cor. i. 29, &c. What saith thy judgment to all this ? If the gospel is come with power, it highly approves and heartily applauds it all, as the best news, the most joyful tidings. Thy soul will cry out of all this, this is the voice of my Saviour, the God of truth, who made me wise unto salvation. I was once a man of no judgment, of a corrupt mind, and reprobate concerning the faith, 2 Tim. iii. 8 ; but now, the light of the gospel of truth hath shined upon me, the voice of Christ has been heard in me ; the power of the good news, the glad tidings of the gospel, have been felt by me ; now I will hear, see, and know nothing, but what bears the image and superscription of Christ, and has the broad seal of heaven stamped upon it, and which exalts Christ the Saviour to the highest, and debases me a sinner to the lowest. O ! how blessed is this, not to judge according to appearances, but to judge righteous judgment ! we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth. Rom. ii. 2. How happy to judge of all things according to the judgment of God, and in humble submission to his all-wise purposes and decrees, to cry out in the humble, applauding language of our Saviour ! Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Matt. xi. 26. This is the Spirit we are to live in, and walk by.

2d. As to the affections, how does the gospel of glad tidings of the grace of God, and salvation by the Son of God, affect them? where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Matt. vi. 21. This is ever found true in experience. The gospel, or the good news, that all our treasure is in Christ, will attract our affections to Christ, and to the commands of Christ; the heart will delight in obeying his will, and living to his glory. What is profession without the affections? only a body without a soul: a carcass without a spirit. Do you mourn over the coldness of your affections to Christ? this is a sure evidence, that your affections are set upon him. Don't rest in supineness and sloth upon this evidence; but let it animate you to attend more to the glad tidings of Christ, that you may live more upon him. Be ever considering that he has the strongest affections for us, and that these are intensely fixed upon us. The gospel reveals this, that our affections may be more set upon him, and may be fired with the love of him. Therefore look more into the gospel, and cry more and more, to the good spirit, to take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto you.

But, these two things will most assuredly deafen our ears to the gospel, and deaden our affections to Christ; therefore, we ought ever to be on our guard against them. 1st. Listening to the terrors of the law. 2d. Indulging the love of the world. 1st. Listening to the terrors of the law. All the denunciations of wrath, and threatenings of vengeance from God, contained in his word, though these are true as the gospel, and shall surely be fulfilled as the gospel, yet they are no part of the gospel; but are contrary to the very nature of the gospel. Neither do they belong to any, who have heard and received the gospel, and are living under the influence of it upon THE SAVIOUR. How absurd to say, the gospel, or glad tidings of curse, wrath, and damnation! equally so is it for those who love the gospel, to be terrified at these. Christ himself denounces these. But still they are no part of the gospel. He says, these shall go away into everlasting punishment. This is the sentence of the law, which shall be fulfilled on all who reject the gospel. But he speaks not one word like this to those who believe the gospel. No. He has nothing but love in his heart, glad tidings on his tongue, and a heaven in his gift for all those. Hence he says, these shall go into life eternal. Matt. xxv. 46. This is the gospel. Ever mind to distinguish here, or else you will bring bondage on your spirit, slavery on your mind, terror on your conscience, spoil the glad tidings of the gospel in your heart, cool and deaden your affections to Christ. O how much, and how often do we suffer by this! Ever remember it is our special mercy, not to be under the law of works, but under the grace of Christ.

2d. As to the love of the world, and an undue attachment to the things of it, look abroad among professors, or rather look within to see the evil of it, and the dreadful effects it hath upon the affections. Yea, hear this solemn declaration. If any man love the world.—what then? can't he be a hearer of the gospel? can't he profess to believe and love the gospel? O yes! such hearers and such professors abound, to the shame of the gospel; but, "the love of the father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. If the affections be supremely fixed on the love of the world, this will as surely exclude the love of God out of the soul, as a stab to the heart, will deprive of life. Where the love of the Father is enjoyed, the love of the world will die away, like one with a mortal wound. Therefore, that we may walk in and enjoy the sweet sense of the Father's love, in the faith of Christ, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are commanded, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Who is the happiest man upon the earth? were I to draw his picture, I would display him, attentively listening to the glad tidings of the gospel, his eyes looking stedfastly to heaven, his heart open to Christ, panting for the love of God in Christ, his hands stretched out after Christ, and his lips crying Jesus thou Son of David; thou Son of God, have mercy upon me, bless me with thy presence, and fill me with thy love. Living and dying, the Lord makes us thus blessed, and thus happy, for his mercy's sake. Amen.

A COLLECT.

GLORY be unto thee O Lord, that it is our inestimable privilege, and unspeakable mercy, to live where the light of thy gospel shines, and the sound of it is heard. Lord give us eyes ever to see its glory, ears ever open to hear its voice, and hearts constantly to feel its power, that we may live and walk continually under its sanctifying influence. And as thou, O Christ, art the sum and substance of the gospel, enable us to believe in thee, love thee, cleave to thee, and live upon thee, so as to be continually receiving out of thy fulness, grace for grace, that we may be filled with all the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace. O that we may glory in, and praise thee; for the freeness of thy gospel: that it comes upon sinners, ungodly, unrighteous, and unholy sinners, who could do nothing to deserve its favours, or to render themselves worthy of its blessings. Grant Lord, that we may find our consciences relieved, our spirits renewed, our hearts rejoiced, and our souls sanctified, through the belief of thy gospel, by the power of thy spirit, that we may have fellowship with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, now and ever. Amen.

The Twenty-eighth Lord's Day.

ON CHRIST'S LOVE, AND HIS DISCIPLES' DUTY.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation: the Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak. Mat. xxvi. 41.

YE who are fond of hearing wonders, attend. These words were spoken at a time when the greatest wonders were to be seen. Can we read them and meditate upon them without amazement? The angels were doubtless spectators of the amazing scene exhibited in this chapter. O how must it fill their souls with wonder and astonishment? For (1st.) Here is the Holy Son of the Most High, clothed in our nature, a MAN, like unto us in all things, except sin: Very God of very God, yet also perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting. Here is a wonder of wonders. Angels admire him as their Creator. Saints adore him as their Saviour. Devils envy him as their Destroyer. And carnal men despise him, and through unbelief undeify him, to their eternal destruction. Here is a contrasted wonder. (2d.) Against this God-Man in one Christ, the chief priests and the rulers conspire unanimously, consult how they may take by subtilty and kill him cruelly. Is it not a wonder, that the Lord of Lords suffers it? (3d.) A woman anoints Christ for his burial. His own beloved disciples, have indignation against her for it. Jesus commends her, and reproves them, not in wrath, but in love. (4th.) One of his own little family, one of his twelve dear disciples, one of his bosom friends, and familiar companions, betrays him into the hands of his cruel, and avowed enemies. Is not this a wonder, that Christ should submit to this? (5th.) The daring effrontery, or impudent boldness of this traitor. For, when Jesus, as the heart-knowing, and heart-searching God, told him to his face of his plot and design, and of the Wo unto him, yet he had the bold front, and daring assurance to ask, Master, is it I? behold with wonder: instead of striking him dead at his feet, Jesus only meekly answered, thou hast said: Thou art the very man. Yet (6th.) This pretended friend, but avowed traitor, sat at the table, and received the supper of the Lord, in the presence of his Lord, with malice prepense in his heart against his Lord. But that the scripture must be fulfilled, is it not a wonder, that the bread and wine did not choke him? But he was born to be hanged, by his own hands, and to be damned for his own sins. (7th.) Christ tells his disciples, ALL ye shall be offended

because of me, and be scattered, fly from, and desert me. They believed it not. Their unbelief gave the lie to their Lord's truth, and to his face. What wonder of mercy, that they did not perish in their vile unbelief? (8th.) Peter says, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Likewise, also said ALL the disciples. What a wonder of patience and long suffering is beheld in Christ to hear and bear this! For (9th.) Their strongest professions of love and faithfulness, are succeeded by acts of weak, unloving faithlessness. Behold, Peter with hellish lies, and ungodly oaths, peremptorily denies him; and as though Christ were the vilest wretch upon the earth, and it were the greatest scandal, even so much as to own him, Peter, as it were, wished he might be damned, if he did know him. What! a lying, cursing, swearing, blaspheming wretch, in Christ's family, and one of his own selected twelve disciples too? Is not this a wonder? But greater wonders are yet to come. For (10th.) See the holy son of God, in the garden of Gethsemane, praying in an agony, his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, with blood streaming from the pores of his body. Look at your Lord's prayers, sorrows, and agonies, and look at the cause of them, our sins, and see what a wonder, that our sins should bring him to this, and affect him thus! (11th.) Behold his disciples. What are they at? Watching over him, standing by him, supporting, cherishing, and comforting of him? Nothing of this. Behold a wonder of stupidity in them; and a wonder of compassion in Christ. See, they are fallen into a sound sleep. Though Christ awoke them, again and again, yet instead of watching with Christ, as he commands them, they fall asleep again and again. They seem not at all to sympathize with him, or care for him. Is it not then a wonder, that he did not leave them to sleep their last sleep, and awake in hell? O! but he loved them, and pitied them, unfeeling as they were of him. Therefore, (12th.) He tenderly expostulates with them, could ye not watch with me one hour? He gently reproves them, and most affectionately finds an excuse for them, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. O! the wonderful love of Christ's compassionate soul to sinners! For, (13th.) He was betrayed into the hands of sinners. Behold, says he, he is at hand, who doth betray me. Here is the wonder of his omniscience as God. He foresaw what was coming upon him, before it actually came. Here is also the wonder of the intrepidity of his soul, and the greatness of his mind as *man*, calmly to submit to all the pains and agonies which he was to suffer. And as a prelude to all, to be betrayed, seized upon, and carried

away by them, as a prisoner of justice, and crucified as a malefactor against the law, when he was holy, harmless, undefiled, without sin, the immaculate Lamb of God, who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth. But, wonder at this most astonishing wonder,

He died to atone,
For sins not his own.

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. (14th.) Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. What wonder is this; Self-preservation is the first law of nature. They saw danger, and fled from it. Yes, but they all made strong declaration to the contrary. True. But they were not fully acquainted with the desperate wickedness, and superlative deceitfulness of their own hearts. But it is a wonder if you do not think you should have acted better than they did, and dared to have stood manfully by Christ, and not have cowardly fled from him. But the greatest wonder is, that ever they should return to him, confess him, glory of and in him, and lay down their lives for the sake of him. This is a wonder indeed of Christ's great love to them, and his free grace bestowed upon them. But lastly, see in Peter, what wonders a look from Christ could effect. Peter had no sooner done lying against, and denying of Christ, cursing and swearing that he knew him not, but the cock crew. Christ turned and looked upon him, and he went out— and what? Hanged himself like Judas? O, no! Why not? Was not the denier as bad a sinner as the betrayer of Christ? The scripture says, there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Rom. iii. 22, 23. Why then was one saved, and the other lost? Behold the wonder of distinguishing grace! One shall be taken, and the other left. Behold, the severity and goodness of God! Rom. xi. 22, on *Judas*, who fell, *severity*, but towards Peter, *goodness*. The Lord, with a look of love, broke Peter's heart for his sin, and he went out, and wept bitterly. What shall we say to these things? only wonder, adore, and be silent, and never dare to reply against God; but ever cry out in astonishment, "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33. This becomes us, and all who believe his word. But there is no end of recounting the wonders of man's apostacy from, rebellion against, and ingratitude to God; and the wonders of Christ's love, grace, and salvation of such wretches as we are. Let us therefore return to our text. Here we have (1st.) A wonder of Christ's love and mercy in warning us of our danger of entering into temptation. (2d.) In directing us to means of

safety, watch and pray. (3d.) His clear knowledge of us, and great sympathy with us, the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

May his blessed Spirit help our infirmities, and strengthen our weakness, that we may delightfully and profitably meditate on these his words, to the joy of our souls, and the glory of his name. Let us consider,

(1st.) Our danger of entering into temptations: that is so as to sin against God, fall under the power of sin, be overcome by sin, fall away from Christ, forsake Christ, and deny him. This we are daily in continual danger of. This we ought constantly to be sensible of. Where can we set our foot? Whether direct our steps, but the danger of temptations stands thick through all our paths? While we have a corrupt nature within us, and a subtle, malicious enemy against us, we shall never be free from temptations. Temptations are not sins. Christ was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin. Heb. iv, 15. The evil and danger lies in entering into temptations; complying with them, and falling by them. Which of all the sins that have been committed, by the sons of fallen Adam, are not we in danger of falling into? For we have got the apostacy of *Adam's* spirit, a murdering and adulterous heart like *David*, the fretful, repining spirit of *Jonah*, the self-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, the lying, swearing nature of *Peter*, a Christ-betraying spirit like *Judas*, and a Christ-deserting spirit like all his disciples. Well may we indeed cry out with the psalmist, Lord, what is man! Ps. viii. 4. What am I! What sin is not in my nature? What temptation am not I exposed to? What danger am I not in of entering into temptation? What need have I continually to attend to that advice, thou standest by faith, be not high-minded, but fear. Rom. xi. 20. Fear the danger of temptation, fear the evil of entering into it, and fear the dreadful consequences of committing sin, upon thy soul. For, it will surely deprive thee of the sense of the heaven of thy Lord's love and peace, bring a hell of misery into thy conscience, and give thee the acute pains of broken bones, as it did *David*; and cause thee, like *Peter*, to go out and weep bitterly. O, see then thy Lord's wonderful love, in warning thee of thy danger of entering into Temptations! Attend

(2d.) To the means of safety he prescribes, watch and pray. A sense of danger, excites fear. Fear incites watchfulness. By watching evils are prevented. By prayer they are overcome, because prayer engages the Lord's strength for us, brings his power into us, and obtains victory for us, over the world, the flesh, and the devil. A watchful soul makes a happy Christian, because he is obedient to his Lord's word, and therefore shall be sure to enjoy the reviving sense of his Lord's presence, in the peace, love, and joy of his heart. What rich blessings!

What precious comforts, did our Lord's dear disciples lose, for want of watching and praying with him one hour? What anguish and distress of soul did they get by neglecting this? May not their cowardly forsaking, and basely deserting their Lord, with all their other pains of remorse, be ascribed to this?

Look abroad into the world of professors, see what temptations they enter into, see what dishonour they bring upon the cause of precious Jesus thereby, and what darkness of soul, and distress of conscience, they bring upon themselves. And may not the reason of all this be ascribed to their disregard of our Lord's command, watch and pray? Yea, look into your own heart, do you find doubts and fears, misgivings and suspicions of your interest in the love of God, and salvation of Christ? Why is this? Is it not because you have slighted your dear Lord's advice, and neglected to watch and pray, and so the blessed presence of your best friend is departed from you; and your worst enemies haunt and beset you? You have grieved the holy Spirit the comforter, and he is gone: you have given way to your worst enemies, your tormentors, and they are come. O! see the evil of this. Be humbled under it. Repent of it. Strive to amend it. Watch and pray. Watch more carefully. Pray more constantly.

Ever remember, the many enemies you have within and around you, sin is not dead within you, your pride, self-righteousness, and self-dependence, are not totally subdued under you. Vile lusts and sinful passions dwell in you. Unbelief works within you. Carnal reasonings exalt themselves against you. The world has bewitching charms to allure, attract and deceive you. You have a nature suited to its very bait. The devil, like a roaring lion, or a subtile fox, with serpentine wisdom, is continually going about seeking whom he may devour. There is not a device of his, but what your flesh is prone to catch, and be deceived by. Let him but strike the spark of temptation, and we have tinder to catch the falling particle of fire, and kindle the flame of hell within us. O! think, think deeply of your many enemies, and say have you not need, constant need to watch and pray? Watch against the force, subtilty, and fraud, of your numerous and worst enemies. Pray to your best friend, to enjoy his power, peace, and victory, that you may be more than conqueror over all, through Christ who hath loved us. Loved us! Yes. Notwithstanding all our vileness, sin and wretchedness, our baseness before him, and our slighting of him, still, O the wonders of his love! He has a heart full of love to us, and a tongue ever to plead for our infirmities.

This is the third point to be considered, our Lord's tender

and compassionate plea for his disciples, "the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Now how do you and I think we should have treated one who pretended to be our dear friend, and yet behaved as these disciples of our Lord did? He was in pain, sorrow, and agony, such as no man ever felt, and yet they fell fast asleep by him, as quite regardless of him. Though again and again awaked by him, and requested to watch with him, yet it seemed as though they preferred their sleep to their Lord, and their rest above his request. Now were we invested with his power, don't you think we should have exerted it, and said in a fit of resentment, go ye sleepy, unfeeling, hard-hearted wretches, into hell as your portion, for the baseness of your conduct. Ah! but his love is as great as his power; and neither knows measure nor end. Salvation, the salvation of SINNERS, is in his heart, and therefore, he has pity on them, and a tongue to plead for them. His heart is made of tenderness, his bowels melt with love, therefore he says, the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. But though their Lord excused them, yet they suffered for their folly, and smarted for their sleeping. Though Christ forgave them, yet who can tell the pains and sorrows they felt for sleeping, when they should have been watching and praying, and for deserting their Lord, when they should have stood stedfastly by him?

THE SPIRIT INDEED IS WILLING. As though Christ had said; "poor hearts, they do really love me, and sincerely delight to obey me, in the spirit of their minds; and the affections of their soul cleave unto me. For I have put my spirit within them, and have given them a spirit which is well attached to my person, cause, and interest in the world. Therefore it proceeds not from any disaffection of mind for me, or for want of loyalty of spirit to me, that they act thus." Is this the sense of our Lord's words? Then take comfort, thou poor, dejected, sorrowful, back-sliding sinner who once had, but hast now lost the sense of the love of Christ, give not over all for lost, though thou hast most basely treated, and most shamefully deserted thy Lord. Though in thy folly, thou hadst no compassion for thy own soul, no regard to thy Lord's love; yet in his love he has the most tender compassion for thee; in his heart forgiveness of thee, and a tongue to plead for thee. Hast thou forsaken him? Yes, say you, most shamefully. Hast thou gratified the flesh, when thou shouldst have been watching in the spirit? Yes, say you, most vilely. And now I feel a hell in my conscience most awfully; I fear and tremble most dreadfully, lest the Lord is departed from me entirely, and that I am ruined eternally. Once, my Lord's presence was the joy of my heart. Now, his absence is the hell of my soul. Is it really so? Is the desire of thy soul still towards Jesús, and the remembrance of his name? Then verily he hath not totally for-

saken thee, nor entirely given thee up. He hath left that in thee, which is attached to him, and looks and longs for him. Thy spirit is willing. Why, O! why shouldst thou add, Christ-dishonouring unbelief to thy Christ-dishonouring conduct? Be afflicted and mourn, and weep, for thy sin and folly, but come thou afresh to thy Lord. He is the same precious Jesus, the same sinner-loving (though always sin-hating) Saviour to day, as he was yesterday. Hear his gracious decree. Believe it, and rejoice in hope. All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, Matt. xii. 37; because he hath made atonement for ALL: and his blood cleanseth from all sin. 1 John i. 7. Hear his kind invitation. Turn, O! backsliding children, saith the Lord—Why? For I am married unto you. Jer. iii. 14. Though thou has acted the part of a most treacherous wife; yet he continues the same loving, faithful, tender-hearted, affectionate husband, therefore he says, return unto me, and I will heal your backslidings. I will love you freely; for mine anger is turned away. Hos. xiv. 4. From this plea of our Lord for his disciples, the spirit indeed is willing, we may safely conclude, that if we are regenerate by his spirit, do believe in Christ, and are made partakers of Christ, there is in our new-born souls, the seed of God, the life of God, or a spirit that is attached to God in Christ, that will always declare for him. And therefore as St. John says, whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, (live in the practice, and under the power of sin, and so commit it, as from the enmity of his soul against God) for *his seed* remaineth in him, and he cannot sin (as the unregenerate do, even unto death, with the free choice of their wills, the full consent of their understandings, the daring enmity of their minds, the malicious purposes of their hearts, the fixed delight of their affections, and with the settled joy of their souls) because he is born of God. 1 John iii. 9. Thus peculiarly distinguished are all the children of God.

But, says our Lord, **THE FLESH IS WEAK.** It is tired with fatigues, and burdened with infirmities. Therefore, it cannot keep pace with the willingness of the spirit. Do we not often, very often find it so? How frequently through the grace of God, do we find a willingness of spirit, yea a delight and joy of spirit, in the work and service of the Lord, so as to be all spirit and all life? We mount with the wings of faith, soar away up to the regions of hope, and fly abroad in the mansions of love, far above the moon, and all sublunary things, and get, as it were, into the expanse of heaven; but alas! like *Anselm's* bird, who strove to soar, but found one foot fastened to the earth, so we soon find the dead weight of a weak, a sinful body of flesh, which pinions us down to earth and sense. When in the spirit we would do good, yet the evil of the flesh is present with us. Our dear Lord knows our frame. He remembers we are but

dust. Shall we, as the carnal, unmeaningly say, "God is merciful, and makes all gracious allowances for our sins and infirmities?" Nay, but Christ does infinitely more than that. For look, O! disciple of Jesus, at your sinful nature, and at the infirmities of your flesh, and say, with the prophet, "Jesus himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Matt. viii. 17. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Heb. iv. 15. Therefore, under a feeling sense of our infirmities, though we ought to be humbled for them, yet by no means should we be dejected for them, as though Christ has no love to us, nor compassion for us because of them. But rather let us remember them, to excite hope in him, and love to him, that even the sinfulness of our nature was imputed to him, and he took all our infirmities upon him, bare them all in his own blessed body upon the tree, and shed his precious blood, to make an atonement for them, and to wash away the guilt of them, so that they shall never be imputed to us for our condemnation. Here is gospel good news, glad tidings of great joy, for all those who feel that the flesh is weak, to any spiritual good, and the body dead because of sin. Therefore, don't nurse your dead frames, nor cherish your weak feelings, but remember, the spirit is life, because of righteousness. Rom. viii. 10. If you believe in Christ, he is your life, and his righteousness is imputed to you, for justification unto life. Rom. v. 8. Therefore, whatever your frames and feelings may be, as to the flesh, yet your spirit is alive to God. Your souls can never perish. Your righteousness can never fail; it is an everlasting one, therefore, you shall never fall into eternal condemnation.

Now, though the flesh is weak, and unapt to the spiritual duties and exercises of the sabbath, and we are ready, sometimes, to give them up, and neglect them; yet what a joyful spirit does the faith of these gospel truths inspire you with? How lively, how loving, how cheerful, do they make us, in the worship and service of our Lord? For, does he plead for us, and say the flesh is weak, yea, that the flesh profiteth nothing? John vi. 63. Nay, that it lusteth against the spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would. Gal. v. 17. O! let us yet rejoice in Christ Jesus, though we have no confidence in the flesh; and bless our covenant God, that our cause, our eternal cause, does not rest upon what we are in ourselves, but upon being found in Christ. Phil. iii. 9.

A COLLECT.

O! LORD Christ, who ever lives to plead for us, pour down thy comforts upon us, that our hearts may love thee, our souls rejoice in thee, and our lives be devoted to thee, for all thy grace bestowed upon us, to the glory of Father, Son, and Spirit, now and ever. Amen.

The Twenty-ninth Lord's Day.

ON THE HINDERANCES OF PRAYER.

—*That your Prayers be not hindered.* 1 Pet. iii. 7.

PERHAPS this text is the least considered, and the admonition contained in it the least attended to, of any one text in the Bible. And yet it is full of importance to the Christian's heart and life. How inestimably precious is the word of God! For there is no station of life, but it instructs us how to act in: No circumstance in life, but it directs us how to behave under: and no duty in life, but it teaches us how to perform it. Happy, ever to be saying with David, "Lord, thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Psalm cxix. 11, 33.

It is storied of an eminently great and good man, (I think one of our Bishops) who being on his travels in foreign parts, paid a visit to a friend, who, like the rich man in the gospel, lived grandly, and fared sumptuously every day, and acquainted his guest, how happy he was in the enjoyment of all he could wish for, and a stranger to any troubles and afflictions. The pious visitor on hearing this, and finding no sense of God and religion in him, nor no family prayer in his house, resolved to depart from thence, saying within himself, surely, where there is no affliction from God, nor prayer to him, God cannot dwell under this roof, and here I dare not tarry. Soon after his departure, the grand mansion, and all the family, were swallowed up by an earthquake. "Lo, this is the man who made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in wickedness." Psalm lii. 7. "O, how often doth the Lord pour out his fury upon the heathen who know him not; and upon the families which call not upon his name." Jer. x. 25. How many such baptized, heathenish, prayerless families have we around us! How dreadful will be the end of all such, when a God forgotten, whose worship has been neglected, and his mercies slighted, shall arise to take vengeance!

But the apostle warns you to know the Lord, seek his face, and pray unto him, "that your prayers be not hindered." This most plainly implies, that all God's people do pray unto him, keep up family prayer before him; and also, that their prayers are liable to be hindered, or obstructed. Let us, therefore,

consider, what are the hinderances of our prayers. O that the Lord may help us in considering, and so bless the consideration to our soul's profit, that this evil may be prevented, so as at no time to get any advantage over us !

Now this is a fixed, scriptural, experienced truth in the divine life, that sensible communion with God in Christ, is the grand object of the Christian's aim. That whatever hinders prayer, obstructs this communion : and whatever interrupts our communion with God, hinders our prayers to him. The life of faith is a life of communion with God ; prayer is the breath of that life. Therefore, whatever tends to obstruct the one, or hinder the other, it is our wisdom to know, and our duty to avoid. There are many things which tend to hinder our prayers, both with our families, and in our closets. As we cannot live without prayer, let us be watchful against the hinderances of our prayers.

Now these things enter into the duty of prayer, and are of the very essence of prayer, (1st.) A sight of our misery, and a sense of our wants, and that the world, the flesh, and the devil, are our constant enemies. (2d.) A discovery that God is our father in Christ. (3d.) That we have a way of access to him, and boldness before him in and by Christ. (4th.) An apprehension of Christ, our merciful high priest, being before the throne of God for us, and touched with the feeling of those infirmities which accompany us. (5.) The ready help which the loving spirit is ever ready to give us, when we pray, or strive to pray, but cannot as we ought without it. (6th.) A view of, and faith in the exceeding great, and precious promises of God, which are all in Christ Jesus, yea and amen, sure and certain to be fulfilled in and upon us to the glory of God. O ye children of God, see your inestimable privileges, consider your inexpressible mercies, study to improve them to God's glory and your soul's comfort ; and therefore be on your guard against all things which oppose them, and hinder your prayers. But what hinders our prayers ?

(1st.) Giving way to our natural evil tempers, and sinful passions, is a great hindrance to prayer. A proper frame of mind, and suitable disposition of spirit, are absolutely necessary to the right performance of prayer. Whatever disorders the frame of our spirits, discomposes our hearts to prayer, and hinders the spirit in prayer. But unruly passions greatly do this, therefore, we ought continually to watch, and be on our guard against them. Hence we are so often commanded to *watch*, as well as pray. And the apostle has a peculiar view to this in the text. He had been giving advice to husbands and wives, how to behave to, and dwell with each other, as heirs together of the hope of eternal life ; he adds, that your prayers be not hindered

by any contrary conduct. His reasoning runs thus. Every heir of eternal life will conscientiously keep up the duty of family prayer. No one will live without it. All will be concerned to perform it aright. But in all families, from various causes, there is danger of intestine jars and discord springing up, from their natural evil tempers, to hinder their prayers. Much depends on the spirit and temper in which they live and act towards each other. If it be contrary to the genius of the gospel, the spirit of peace and love, be assured, this will certainly hinder your prayers: so that you will be tempted, either totally to lay aside the duty of prayer, or perform it in a cold, formal, heartless manner. As all strife, anger, bitterness, clamour, &c. are contrary to the spirit of prayer, they will certainly hinder the life and power of prayer, therefore must be put away; and we must be kindly affectioned to one another, that that we may pray in the spirit, and find the grace and power of the spirit, helping our infirmities, and enabling us to pray as we ought.

Now I appeal to Christians, if what has been advanced, they have not found true in experience? Say, have you not often found that Satan has gained an advantage over you, and have you not given place to him, by exalting such a spirit and such tempers, as are diametrically contrary to the spirit of faith in, love to, and hope on the God of peace, unto whom you pray, and the prince of peace, whose disciples you profess to be? I will be the first to hold up my hand, plead guilty to this, take shame unto myself for it, and cry, God be merciful to me a sinner! O how has satan been pleased, the Spirit grieved, our prayers hindered, our hearts pained, and our spirits discomfited by this cursed conduct! Have not you often found it so? O let us not think lightly of this! the Lord, for his mercy's sake, lay it with deep conviction upon our hearts, that we may humble ourselves before him, take shame to ourselves for it, study and strive to avoid it, and cry mightily to him, for power to withstand and conquer ourselves, and overcome our evil tempers and sinful passions. For they are such vile enemies to the peace of our souls, so hurtful to others, so dishonourable to Christ, so grieving to his Spirit, and such a hinderance to our prayers, that they make our hearts weak, our knees feeble, and our hands faint. But in opposition to all this, says Paul, "I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," 1 Tim. ii. 8; as though he had said, wrath and contention will as surely bring on doubting and dejection of heart, and cause the hands to hang down in prayer, as a stab to the heart will issue in death. I write feelingly on this subject, having severely suffered by it. O may we see the evil, strive against it, and by God's grace put it away from us.

(2dly) A worldly spirit, if indulged, will hinder our prayers. This will prey upon the very vitals of prayer, eat up the consolation of the gospel, and devour the spirit of prayer. For worldly thoughts, anxious and solicitous concern after the enjoyment of the perishing things of this life, will distract our minds, and hinder our prayers. One was boasting much of his power to pray, and to keep his mind from distraction in prayer; a person said, "I will give you my horse, if you will only say the Lord's prayer, and think of nothing but God all the while." The man eagerly began, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name"—but instantly broke off, and addressed the person, "I must have the bridle with the horse." "No, neither," replied he, "for thou hast lost both already." Whether the story be true or not, the moral is good. If the affections go out in an eager pursuit after the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, it will bring on distraction of mind, an ague of coldness in the heart to prayer, the pulse of the soul will beat very low, and there will be a languor in the affections to spiritual blessings, and heavenly enjoyments. Though the form of prayer may be kept up, yet it will be but lip-service; for the life and spirit of prayer will be wanting. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. And instead of the affections being set upon things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, they will be grovelling on the earth, where Satan reigns: because the flesh prevails over the Spirit, and the vanities of time, have pre-eminence over the realities of eternity. Now, as all this is contrary to faith, it must hinder prayer. For, faith and prayer go hand in hand. If faith be strong, prayer is fervent. If faith be weak, prayer is languid. Hence David cries, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: and quicken thou me in thy way." Psalm cxix. 37. And Agur prays, "give me not riches." Prov. xxx. 8. Strange Prayer! who uses it from his heart? who is as much afraid of riches, as of poverty, and prays as earnestly against them? Happy, only happy, is that man, who seeks the unsearchable riches of Christ, and prays to enjoy all in him.

But when an earthly minded, and worldly spirit gains the ascendancy, it infatuates and bewitches the soul. Hence we hear many professors complain, that they are so immersed in business, that they have not time for prayer and spiritual concerns. Though their prayers may be put off so, yet death will not. Amidst all their hurry, death will demand time and cessation from it; why should not God? But is what they complain of felt as an evil? how do they act under it? do they strive and pray against it in good earnest, and are willing to throw off part of their business or profits? nay, rather, do they not plunge deeper, and strive to amass more of the world? if so,

the complaints are only from the tongue, but the heart is unaffected with them. Therefore, their prayers are hindered by them, and they cannot heartily pray, for a less portion of the riches, honours, and pleasures of life. That's an awful sentence, if any man (let him profess what he will) love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John ii. 15. The conduct in life loudly speaks the affections of the heart. If any man's time is so taken up by, and devoted to the objects of time and sense, that he has scarcely an hour from morning to night, deliberately to think of God, read of God, or pray to God, is it at all uncharitable, to ask, how dwelleth the love of God in him? is it possible there should be the least room in his heart for God's love? If a man can be happy whose prayers are thus hindered, and whose heart is destitute of the sense of God's love, then such professors may enjoy happiness. For where the love of the world prevails, the sense of God's love departs, and prayers will be hindered, if not totally neglected. The more self-denial of life, the more love of God in the heart: the more love of God, the more praying to God, and rejoicing in God.

(3dly.) Worldly companions are great hinderances to prayer. We are prone to catch their bad Spirit of levity, and their evil tempers of folly, so as to lose sight of our beloved, let go our hold of him, turn our affections from him, and cease crying unto him. Yea, we are very apt to consider them, and think them happy, because we see them merry and joyful. And though they are strangers to God, and live without prayer to him, yet all seems well with them: they have all their hearts can wish, while we mourn in silent sadness before the Lord, seek him sorrowing, and cry unto him full of distress at times. They are strangers to the grief and concern we feel, in finding backwardness to prayer, deadness in prayer, shame after prayer; and fear lest God should reject our prayers, and refuse to answer them to the joy and comfort of our souls; and therefore are ready to conclude, better like them to leave off all prayer. Thus by looking at them, we forget ourselves, and our covenant God in Christ. Have you never found this temptation beset you? I have often. Job was distressed by it. Job xxi. Asaph was staggered on account of it. Psalm lxxiii. The less converse with such the better. For we are more prone to catch their prayerless spirit, than they are our praying frame. Many other hinderances of prayers might be added, but let these suffice. Let us remember in general, that what don't help to prayer, tends to hinder our prayers. The Lord in mercy stir us up to watch in all things. A word or two by way of

IMPROVEMENT.

(1st.) Notwithstanding all our hinderances, see and rejoice, at our encouragements to prayer, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. It is our special mercy to know the God we pray to. We are not left to erect an altar to the unknown God. No. For, ever blessed be his name, he has revealed himself to us, in the endearing relation of OUR FATHER, reconciled to us, at peace with us, seated on a throne of grace to receive us, ready to bestow every blessing upon us, hath given exceeding great and precious promises to us, and commands us to come unto him, and call upon him. For, vile sinners as we are in ourselves, GOD has made us accepted in his beloved Son Jesus Christ, who is our righteous advocate. And because we know not how to pray as we ought, the Spirit of our dear Father, and loving brother, is given us, to help our infirmities: so that as the LORD delights in and over us, to do us good, he loves to hear our voice, asking the richest mercies, and the greatest blessings from him. Let us therefore come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need, Heb. iv. 16; so that a sight of our great miseries, as guilty sinners, and a sense of our need, as wretched creatures, so far from hindering our prayers, should urge us to go more frequently, more boldly, and more importunately, because Jesus the Son of GOD is before the throne of GOD for us, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

2d. We are encouraged to pray, not only because GOD is a Father to us, his Son a mediator for us, but the Holy Spirit is also an intercessor within us, who "helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. viii. 26. We are often most helped by the Spirit in prayer, when we think we are least. That is often the best prayer which we think is worst. We judge ourselves to pray best, when our words flow fast, our hearts are warm, and our spirits lively. Perhaps there may be then, most of the creature, and least of the Spirit. It is not the *arithmetic* of our prayers, how many they are: nor their *rhetoric*, how eloquent they may be: nor their *geometry*, how long they be: nor their *music* from the tone of our voice; nor their *logic* from their method; but the heart-felt *divinity* of them, offered up in the name of Jesus through faith, when we groan under our burthens, sigh and lament our wretchedness, and our hearts are broken with sorrow for what we feel of ourselves, and can only breathe out broken petitions, GOD be merciful to me a sinner—Lord help—Lord pity—Jesus save, &c. But when it is thus, we think we don't pray at all: whereas this is the very

way which the Spirit intercedes with groanings, which cannot be uttered. This is the true spirit of prayer : the right frame of mind to live in. This is consistent with the highest state of joy and rejoicing in Christ ; to be broken to pieces in ourselves, to be nothing in ourselves but misery, poverty, wretchedness and want, so as to have no confidence in ourselves. Now all that was said of proud passions, a worldly spirit, and carnal companions hindering our prayers is, because they elate our minds, and carry our spirits from a true sight, real sense and feeling of ourselves, what poor, needy, wretched sinners we are. But the Holy Spirit brings us down, and teaches us to pray as we ought, looking unto Jesus only, and rejoicing in the love of God our Father in him, casting all our care upon him, and leaving all our concerns with him for time and eternity.

Enough has been said to humble and encourage us. God grant it may do both. What remains ? but that we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ, in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving for all our mercies ; and look forward in hope, to that joyful day, when Christ shall take us to himself, to enjoy his presence in glory, when every hinderance to love, joy, peace, adoration, and praise, shall be for ever banished. And till then, let us, like David, "encourage ourselves in the Lord our God," 1 Sam. xxx. 6. Keep his sabbaths holy, and wait upon him continually. For, (O, most precious promise !) "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, Isai. xl. 31."

A COLLECT.

O LORD, thou loving Spirit, evermore teach us to pray, and keep us in a praying spirit. Deliver us from all things which may hinder our prayers. O, bring us low and keep us humble ; and grant us such a clear sight, and comfortable knowledge of God being our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus, that we may ever love him, delight in him, rejoice before him, and be devoted in body and soul to the glory of him, now and ever. Amen.

The Thirtieth Lord's Day.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF ADDITION.

Add to your Faith. 2 Pet. i. 5.

THE Holy Ghost quickens and leads us as poor sinners to Christ for salvation: Christ washes us from our sins in his blood, justifies our persons in his righteousness, and presents us to God the Father, who accepts us as righteous in his beloved Son, and looks upon us with an eye of complacency; and delights in us, as though we were not sinners, had no sin in us, nor had ever committed one sin against him. This is the sum and substance of our most holy faith. Here is the joy of faith, the glory of faith, the victory of faith, and the triumph of faith, over all our enemies, sin, satan, death and hell. Now the mystery of this faith is to be ever held fast in a pure conscience, in spite of every foe, and against all opposition: for by this faith the conscience is cleansed from guilt, possessed with peace, and made pure, and kept pure. And, "through this faith, we are kept by the power of God unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. To such poor sinners, who had obtained this precious faith, Peter addresses himself, and exhorts them constantly to practice the rule of addition—**ADD TO YOUR FAITH.**

O! may the Holy Spirit, who inspired this word, impress the importance of this duty upon our hearts, and influence us daily to practise it. From this exhortation, this scripture doctrine is naturally raised, and plainly presented to our view; namely, that though we as sinners are justified freely, and fully by faith in Christ Jesus *only*; yet that faith is not *alone* in the Christian's life and walk; but that good works, which spring from faith, are to be added to our faith. These manifest that we are partakers of a holy faith, the faith of God's elect. Let us therefore consider,

1st. The nature of the duty here enjoined us.

2d. The blessings consequent upon the practice of it.

3d. The evil of neglecting it.

1st. The nature of this duty, add to your faith. But ye believing, adopted sons and daughters of God, think not that ye are here called upon to add any thing to your faith, in order to recommend yourselves to God, to make yourselves righteous before him, and to justify yourselves in his sight. No. This, instead of adding to your faith, is to attempt to add to the work of Christ. It is adding pride to faith, it is contrary to faith, destructive of faith, and detracts from the glory of Christ who

is the object of faith : in whom we are perfectly righteous, by whom we are fully justified, and for ever accepted by God the Father, to the praise of the glory of his own grace.

Again, think not we are here called upon to add to our faith, in order to sanctify, and make ourselves holy before God. This is to add folly to faith. This is contrary to divine truth, and our most holy faith. For we are sanctified in Christ Jesus. Christ of God is made sanctification to us. 1 Cor. i. 30. By the power of the Spirit through faith, we are sanctified, separated, and set apart, for God's glory and service, that being made holy in Christ, free from sin, and become the servants of God, we may have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Yet our fruits of holiness do not, cannot, sanctify and make us holy ; but they evidence and prove that we are sanctified and made holy in Christ, that Christ lives in us, and that we are really and truly alive to God ; therefore, we hear his word, and obey his will.

Now, it is absolutely necessary that our understandings be clear, and our judgments sound in these particulars, or else our hearts cannot be happy, nor will our works be evangelical, as proceeding from faith and love. Let us not therefore proudly think, or vainly attempt by any works or obedience of ours, to add any thing to the covenant of grace, to the work and salvation of the Son of God, in order to secure God's favour, to entitle ourselves to his love, or to merit his kingdom. For, thus argues the apostle, though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. This I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ. The law which was 430 years after cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of non effect. Gal. iii. 15, 17. Thus the covenant of grace, love, and peace, and the promise of eternal life made with Christ, for and in behalf of all his seed, standeth fast for ever and ever ; and these are to stand fast in our consciences by faith, without adding any thing to them, or diminishing ought from them. All must be right within, in order that all may be right without. For we are bound by a positive command, and it is our indispensable duty, to add to our faith.

This implies constant study, and diligent endeavour, to glorify God, honour Christ, and adorn the gospel in our life, walk, and conversation, by bringing forth those fruits of righteousness, godliness, and sobriety, which the gospel of the grace of God enjoins us. So that it is not enough for us, as believers in Christ, to have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust ; but we must also add to our faith, such holy and heavenly virtues, as may adorn our lives, and shew forth the praises of our God and Saviour. If we have gone through

the rule of *reduction*, we must ever continue in the rule of *addition*.

(1st.) Add to your faith, virtue ; every act of moral goodness ; but rather that spiritual fortitude and Christian resolution, which faith inspires. What is a Christian without courage ? we shall go on quite heartless and comfortless in the ways of the Lord, without courage and boldness ! Go on ! yea, rather we shall often stand, and be ready to turn aside from following Christ, if courage forsakes, and fears prevail over us. Poor Peter had woeful experience of this. He awfully fell through this. He felt the dreadful evil of this. It cost him many a bitter tear ; and many a distressing fear. Therefore he exhorts us to add to our faith courage. Yea, he practised this himself, and has left us a noble example of boldness, for imitation. See how he and John, made the rulers marvel at their boldness in confessing Jesus before them, though they were in danger of imprisonment and death by them. Acts iv. Believers, remember ye are soldiers enlisted under the banner of the captain of your salvation, and are called to fight the good fight of faith, therefore you must add courage to your faith ; or you will soon faint in battle, lay down your arms, quit the field, cowardly forsake your Lord, fly into the hands, and fall under the power of your enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But alas ! we are all naturally bold and courageous enough in the service of sin and satan, in following the ways of this wicked world, and in gratifying the lusts of our flesh ; but are destitute of spiritual courage and Christian boldness in openly confessing Christ, avowing the truths of his gospel, and practising those duties he commands. Here our courage fails us, fears beset us, and shame gets the advantage over us. It is a great point to be truly sensible of this, to be humbled for it, to know that we cannot fortify our own minds, nor give courage to our own hearts, and yet to be fully convinced of the absolute necessity of adding this virtue to our faith. Now here lies the mystery. Why then are we called upon to add to our faith, courage ? to remind us of Jesus the author, object, and finisher of our faith, who says, without me, ye can do nothing. John xv. 5. That we may exercise our faith upon him, who is the strength of our hearts, and the strengthener of our faith. All our courage and strength for the exercise of every grace, and discharge of every duty, comes from Christ. The more we look to him, and live upon him, the more strength and courage we shall derive from him : ever saying with Paul, I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me. Phil. iv. 13. As faith comes from Christ, leads to Christ, fixes on Christ, and centres in Christ, so it obtains all its virtue and

power from the grace of Christ. Thus we are daily, yea constantly, to add to our faith virtue, or boldness in confessing Christ to be all in all to our souls, to follow him in all his examples, and to obey him in all his commands, that we may enjoy them in all his comforts. This virtue we need all through life and death. Lord help us to add it to our faith.

(2d.) Add to your faith, knowledge; that is, farther advances in spiritual understanding. O christian! know what you may, yet you know but in part, yea, a very small part too, of the everlasting love of God, the richness of the covenant of his grace, the preciousness of Christ, the glory of his work, the fulness of his salvation, the freeness and greatness of the promises which are in him, and the glory which shall be revealed when he shall appear; the purity of God's law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the deceitfulness of your own heart, the wickedness of your nature, the pride of your free will, and the idolatry of your self-righteousness, &c. Read, daily read, and constantly study therefore, the word of the Lord, in which all these things are displayed, to get more knowledge of them, and to be more experienced in them, and to add this to your faith. So you will add prudence to your courage. And while your faith glories in Christ, you will loath yourself. While you exalt him, you will debase yourself. While you glory in him, you will be ashamed of yourself, and be clothed with humility before him.

(3.) Add to your faith temperance. We are all naturally prone to be intemperate in the use of the things of this life, some in one way, and some in another. But this intoxicates the mind, and renders it unfit both for the service and enjoyment of God. Therefore, says our Lord, Take heed lest at *any time* your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Luke xxi. 34. Here we see that our Lord ranks the cares of this life, with surfeiting and drunkenness, as equally intoxicating the mind, and as injurious to the soul. All must be alike hated of the christian, and avoided by him, as contrary to the faith, hope, and comfort of our souls. But the more we live and walk by faith on the Son of God, the more temperate we shall be in all things, and thus shall we add temperance to our faith.

(4th.) Add to your faith patience. There is not a day we arise from our beds, but we find the truth of this assertion, Ye have need of patience. Heb. x. 36. How is it to be obtained? out of the fulness of the grace of Christ. The world, the flesh, and the devil, will try our patience. How is't to be maintained? by living wholly upon, walking closely to, and conversing much with, that perfect mirror of patience, the

lamb of God. So we shall catch his spirit, and partake of his temper, and add to our faith patience. All impatience arises from pride and unbelief. All patience springs from faith in Jesus. For faith brings Christ into the heart, he calms the boisterous waves and surging billows of impatience, and hushes all into a profound calm of peace and stillness.

(5th.) Add to your faith godliness, A holy, loving, reverential fear of God, as a child to your reconciled Father in Jesus, who has loved you with an everlasting love before all worlds, delights in and over you to do you good in time, and will bless you to all eternity. Worship him. Wait on him in all his appointed ordinances. Serve, honour and adore him. Magnify, exalt and praise him at all times, under all circumstances, in every place, and by all means, ever study to give glory unto him.

(6th.) Add to your faith, brotherly kindness. This is an exotic, a foreign, a heavenly plant: It grows not in nature's garden. How are we to get it? by exercising the faith of our hearts, on the loving kindness of our dear, elder brother, Jesus, the Son of God, to us. Do you live by, and live upon the marvellous loving kindness of your Lord? Hath he betrothed thee to himself in loving kindness? Hos. ii. 19. Hath he crowned thee with loving kindness and tender mercies? Ps. ciii. 4. O, let thy soul dwell much on this! This will draw out thy soul, in loving kindness, to all thy brethren in him. Remember they are all flesh of Christ's flesh, and bone of his bone. We are all one in him. What loving kindness we shew them, he takes as done unto himself. Matt. xxv. 40. O, then, draw loving kindness from Christ, and add brotherly kindness to your faith.

(7th.) Add to your faith charity, or love to all men. Though we cannot love all as brethren in Christ, yet we ought so to love all men, even enemies as well as friends, as the creatures of God, as our fellow creatures, with a love of compassion, so as to be ever ready to assist and do them any good, as far as our power and influence extends. Thus God loves all. For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Matt. v. 45. Imitate your heavenly Father in Christ. Though you have not a sun to bestow upon them to enlighten, enliven, and comfort them; nor rain to give, to refresh and nourish them; yet, you have an ear for their complaints, an eye to pity them, a heart to feel for their distresses, a tongue to speak to them, and for them, and to their good, feet to travel to serve them, and a hand to stretch forth for their relief. Remember you live by the mercy of God, and are sustained by the grace of Christ. Is this your faith? then add to your faith charity. What a blessed and glorious string of graces are here! how do they adorn faith?

They all spring from faith, and must be added to our faith. Let us now see.

(2d.) The blessings consequent upon the practice of this.

(1st.) If these things be in you and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ver. 8. What a most precious blessing is this ! To be a christian is a great and unspeakable blessing ; but to be a lively, zealous, fruitful christian, is the greatest blessing on this side glory. Yea, it is glory in the soul, and the soul in the enjoyment of glory. For these precious fruits spring from the knowledge of Christ, are brought forth to the acknowledgment of him, and bring praise, honour, and glory to him. God the Father is well pleased with the fruits of his beloved children. God the Son is delighted, to eat of the pleasant fruits of his sister and spouse, Song v. 1. And God the Holy Ghost is glorified by our fruitfulness, as flowing from his uniting us to Christ. And he sweetly testifies to our hearts, that we are the children of God, members of Christ, and heirs of glory. Our brethen in Christ are delighted with us, and profited by us. Yea, all within the reach of our influence, get some good from us. And as to our own souls, what shall I say? all language fails, every description comes short of our blessedness. But,

(2d.) Says Peter, if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. Ver. 10. Here is the glorious doctrine of our present safety, and final perseverance. It is maintained and carried on in the way of holy obedience, and abounding in the fruitfulness of good works. In this way the Lord keeps his people comfortable now, and safely to the end. O, let us never attempt to separate the means from the end: fruitfulness in life, from final perseverance unto eternal salvation. If we continue in this way, we shall never fall foully, nor finally. Though in many things we all offend. Though in all things we all fall short of our duty in God's glory. Though none of us all, are in a state of perfection in ourselves, yet, being in Christ, abiding by Christ, cleaving to Christ, and walking with Christ, in the faith and love of our hearts, we have all perfection in him, persevering grace from him, sweet fellowship with him, joyful union to him, and constant communications of sanctifying influences from him, so as to keep us from falling away from him. But, we shall not only be kept from falling, but to crown all, says the apostle,

(3d.) So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Here is the blessedness of all blessings, O that we could reach the height of this abundant glory, in the idea of our minds, and the experience of our hearts! Then would our souls be all fired with love, and in an ecstatic transport of joy,

so that we should look down with a holy contempt upon all things here below, and press with glowing ardour to the full possession of this kingdom, *now* in all the richness of its abundant grace, and hereafter in all its celestial glory.

For, even *now* this abundant entrance into Christ's kingdom shall be given us. We shall freely enjoy even in this life, so much of the spiritual reign of Christ in our hearts, and experience such an abundance of the blessings of his spiritual kingdom in our souls, as will make us quite happy, comfortable, and joyful in him. We shall daily banquet upon the rich repasts of his love, and hear his loving voice saying to us, Eat O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved, Song v. 1. Every day shall be a high day of festivity and joy to our souls, and the return of every sabbath day, shall put us in more full and sensible enjoyment of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Fears and doubts of our interest in Christ, shall be banished from our hearts. And such an abundant entrance shall be ministered to us, into all the richness and glory of his kingdom, that assurance, yea all the fulness of the assurance of hope shall possess our souls.

Thus shall it be with every fruitful soul in life, and when the messenger of death shall be commissioned to call us hence, our dying pillows shall be made soft by the love of Christ, our dying beds made comfortable with the presence of Christ, our hearts supported by the power of Christ, our prospect shall be glorious in the views of Christ, our souls filled with the triumphs of joy in seeing the gates of the kingdom thrown open to our view, and Christ standing at the right hand of God with extended arms to receive, embrace, and welcome us to glory, honour, immortality and eternal life. O who can fully describe all the blessedness of this abundant entrance into Christ's kingdom! The Lord grant us the sweet experience of it in our souls now, and the fullest enjoyment of it, hereafter in glory! But, let us

(3d.) Consider the evil of neglecting the duty here enjoined of adding to our faith, &c. Peter describes the awful state of such in these words. "He is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Verse 9. Do we not meet with many such professors? They have neglected the Lord's commands, and he slights their souls. They have withdrawn their allegiance from him, and duty to him, and he has withdrawn his presence, light and comfort from them. "He is blind." Not totally so. For he sees enough at times of the baseness and folly of his conduct to make him miserable. But, he is blinded to the charms of Christ, by the objects of time and sense, so that he sees not to his comfort, the glory of a reconciled God in the face of Jesus

Christ : he walks in darkness as to any comfortable sense of interest in Christ, and sweet fellowship with God, the Father, and his Son-Jesus Christ. All is darkness and confusion in his soul. O this is miserable blindness indeed ! " He cannot see far off : " The eye of faith is dim and obscure. He cannot see that the end of his faith shall be salvation : the end of his life, eternal glory. No. He sees only present things to comfort him ; and when he thinks of future, he is all fear, doubt, terror, and uncertainty. For he cannot clearly see, that when death has destroyed his body, Christ will receive his soul. O this is a dreadful, short-sighted state !

" He has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Once he professed to have tasted the forgiving love of God : Once he gloried in the knowledge of remission of sins in the blood of the Lamb ; but now the most distant traces of the sense of this, is blotted out of his memory. He can neither recal, nor recover that sweet, joyful, soul-ravishing sense of what he once professed to have received. His old sins, like so many ghosts, rise up in dread form and haunt him. He cannot lay them. He cannot see that they were laid upon Christ ; and that Christ bore them in his own body upon the tree ; therefore his conscience bears them, his soul is terrified with them, and he is in dread and terror, lest he should be damned for them. O see what an awful thing it is, to profess the Lord and his truths, and yet to slight and disobey his commands. O let us ever remember, that doing the Lord's will, is inseparably joined with believing his word. Adding to our faith, is as much our indispensable duty, as believing in Christ for salvation. What God hath joined together, let no man dare put asunder. The faith of the gospel is a most holy faith. And there is no enjoying the comforts of faith, but by walking in the obedience of faith. We are as much before ordained of God to walk in good works, or to add to our faith good works, as we are predestinated to the adoption of sons, and to be heirs of glory. Eph. ii. 10 ; i. 5.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, in mercy deliver us from resting in, and being deceived by, a dead faith. Son of God, be thou the life of our souls, and the life of our graces. Holy Spirit quicken us to all fruitfulness, by the faith and love of Jesus Christ our Lord, that we may evidence our faith, by our works shew forth the praises of thee our God, who hath translated us out of nature's darkness, into the glorious kingdom of thy dear Son, to whom be glory now and ever. Amen.

The Thirty-first Lord's Day.

ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GRACE IN CONVERSION.

And Saul arose from the Earth. Acts ix. 8.

AND a blessed arising it was. The most blessed that ever Saul knew in his life. For in consequence of his falling to the earth, under the revelation of Jesus, and arising from the earth, at his command, his soul is now as full of glory and happiness, as it can possibly contain. And his heart is full as it can hold of the love of Jesus; and with the most enlarged faculties of his heavenly soul, he is now around the throne of God and the Lamb, shouting praises in the highest, for his everlasting love, electing grace, sovereign purposes, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, sanctifying influences, persevering power, and eternal glory. For in the fullest, clearest, brightest manner, he now sees all is of God. And, he would as soon ascribe any, the least part of his salvation, to the devil, as to any free-will power of his own, to any works of righteousness which he had done, or to any terms and conditions, which he had performed.

And, as he now perfectly sees and fully knows all salvation is of God: so he also as perfectly sees, knows, and confesses that all is of grace, free, sovereign, unfrustratable, undeserved favour. Nothing that ever he did upon earth, could at all add the least to, or give him any title, right, or claim, to an interest in the love of God, and in the salvation of the LAMB. For Saul's name was enrolled in the slain Lamb's book of life, from the foundation of the world. Rev. xvii. 8. Not all the devils in hell, nor all the men upon earth, nor all the sins that ever Saul committed, (and he went the most dreadful lengths in sin too; few around the throne exceeded him) could possibly erase it. Therefore he was a called, regenerated, converted, pardoned, justified, sanctified, saved *sinner*, on the earth. Hence he cried, **BY THE GRACE OF GOD, I AM WHAT I AM.** 1 Cor. xv. 16. Now he is a perfect saint in glory, in the full enjoyment of God. And, now his language is, **BY THE GRACE OF GOD, I AM WHERE I AM.** All that has been observed of Paul, is equally true of every converted sinner upon earth, and every glorified saint in heaven. And their language also will be the very same too.

I suppose we have not the least doubt of Paul's being an elected, converted man, and that he is now in heaven: though we may have doubts concerning ourselves. Yet, extraordinarily remarkable as Saul's conversion was, let us meditate upon it,

and see whether there is not some similiarity between his conversion and ours, if our souls are really converted unto Christ : And if they are, the Lord grant we may get stronger evidence, and fuller proof of it, that so we may be more comfortable in our souls, rejoice more in God our Saviour, and from our hearts, with our lips, and in our lives, give more glory unto him for electing grace, redeeming love, and converting power.

Let us consider Saul's falling to the earth, and his rising from it. (1st.) Saul fell to the earth. How came he there ? How came this fierce, this valiant champion for the devil dismounted ? what see we, the courageous Saul, sprawling upon the earth, and his journey stopt ! What's the matter ? Has any disciple of Jesus met him, coolly reasoned with him, and by the power of human eloquence, clearly demonstrated to him, the cruelty and barbarity of his schemes, and by the force of moral suasion, caused him to desist from his bloody purpose of slaughtering the sheep of Christ ? No. We hear not one word of this. But, just before he arrived at his journey's end, near Damascus, the destined place to execute his barbarous design, Lo, "suddenly, there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth." This was not at night, but at noon day. Now let us stop here, and meditate upon this fall of Saul's to the earth.

(2d.) Suppose now any of Saul's Pharisaical companions, who were prodigiously wise in their own eyes, and wonderfully righteous in their own sight, had come to Saul, and said, Hey-day ! Saul, what aileth thee ? art thou mad ? why dost thou lie here, panting, groaning and sighing ? what art thou become a visionary, a mad enthusiast, or (had it been in the present day) a crack-brained *Methodist* ! Prithee man, exert your reason. Get up. Mount your horse. Pursue your journey, and all will be well. Don't give way to these flights of fancy. What think you, Saul would have said to all this ? would he not have smiled at their folly, treated it with contempt, considered their talk like the incoherent raving of a lunatic, and have taken wisdom's advice, "answer not a fool, according to his folly." Prov. xxvi. 4 ; or with God enquire, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge ?" Job xxxviii. 2. For, by this light, though Saul was struck blind, yet he saw what he never saw before. By this fall, he felt what he never felt before. He saw his misery. He felt his wretchedness. The Lord had stopt, and arrested him, in the height of his mad career : and as to the sea, agitated with all the rage of an indignant tempest, said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Job. xxxviii. 11.

(3d.) Have you ever been struck to the earth, by a supernatural light from heaven ? I know many, who would laugh at

the folly of the question, and think its proposer as mad as a bedlamite. Such plainly answer in the negative, and fully prove they are in nature's darkness, even till now, and are pluming themselves in their fancied notion of moral rectitude. So did Saul. So do we all, till the light of truth, the light of life, supernatural light from heaven, shines into our dark hearts, and enlightens our minds, which are naturally in darkness, and the shadow of death. In thy light, O Jesu, thou light of life, we see light. Ps. xxxvi. 9. "All things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light, Ephes. v. 13. O, when this light from heaven shines into our hearts, it reprov's our consciences for sin, manifests that we are under condemnation by sin, and causes us to fall to the earth under fears and terrors, with trembling and astonishment, as Saul did, on the account of our sins! Have you ever seen this, and felt this? there can be no conversion to heaven, without this light from heaven. No heart can turn to Christ, without this light from Christ. For, he can neither see himself, nor Christ. No. No more than, if the sun was blotted out of the firmament, we could possibly see any one object. No one but he who created the soul, can create light in that soul, which is naturally in darkness. Our God Jesus created all things; without him was not any thing made which is made. John i. 3. He was the true light which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man, ver. 9, to see his lost state, by which he becomes sensible of his eternal danger of inevitable destruction.

(4th.) Saul fell to the earth, whereby his journey was stoped, and his pursuit prevented. Where was you journeying, when this light from heaven, the light of the glorious gospel, shone into your heart? even to hell post haste. What were your pursuits? sin, folly, madness, destruction, rebellion against God, enmity against Christ, contempt of his gospel: and though not to butcher others for confessing it, yet laughing at their folly, and ridiculing their madness, even to the damnation of your own soul. Such was the journey, and such were the pursuits of you and me, and all men upon the earth. But when the light shined from heaven, we fell to the earth, confessed we were men of the earth, nothing but earthly-minded, composed only of sensual appetites, brutish lusts, and devilish passions: ignoble as earth. More so, because sinful, accursed earth. Now we understand the language of the psalmist, and consider its address, not to inanimate beings, but we feel its force upon our own selves, "Tremble thou *earth*, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the GOD of Jacob. Psalm cxiv. 6. For now the Lord ariseth to shake terribly the *earth*, (with a sight of the Lord, and for fear of the glory of his majesty, and to shake us out of ourselves, and our vain, earthly

hope) and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord *alone* shall be exalted in that day. And the idols, (all our earthly hopes, all confidence in ourselves, in our works, of what we are, and what we can do, towards our salvation) shall he utterly abolish. For, the day, (the meridian day of his gospel) shall be upon every one who is proud and lofty, and upon every one who is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." He shall even fall to the earth, without the least hope in himself: though naturally, in our own imaginations, we are high as *towers*, lofty as *mountains*, strong as *fenced walls*, stately as *gallant ships of war*, sturdy as the *Oaks of Bashan*, and as speciously showy, as *pleasant pictures*. Isai. ii. 11, &c. All these images, the Spirit uses to set forth to us, our pride and loftiness. O blessed day of the Lord! O glorious light from heaven! O precious fall to the earth! for now the Lord, the God of our salvation, is *alone* exalted; glorified in our eyes, and magnified in our hearts. Hence we will say no more to the idols of our hearts, the work of our hands, ye are our God's: For in thee, and only thee, O Lord, the fatherless, (who have no eye to pity them, nor hand to relieve them with fatherly affection) findeth mercy, Hos. xiv. 3. Thus this falling to the earth, is like autumn to the trees, when the leaves drop off: For the fig leaves of our own righteousness we see drop off, and will no longer hide our nakedness, or prevent our shame. But did Saul, do enlightened sinners by Christ, fall to the earth to rise no more? No. Blessed be the Lord, as he said to Saul, so he says to us, *ARISE*: and Saul arose from the earth.

(6th.) Let us secondly consider this. Heaven's wonder, and heaven's glory, is in this light from heaven, and in this fall to the earth, and arising from the earth. For, Saul fell to the earth, in the image of the devil; he arose from the earth, a new creature in Christ. He fell, a cursed sinner in himself; he arose a blessed saint in Christ. He fell, a bloody persecutor of Christ, he arose to be an apostle of Christ. He fell a vile blasphemer against Christ, he cries, as an humble petitioner to Christ, Lord, what will thou have me to do? He fell, full of earthly hellish pursuits, he arose to quit the devil's service, his earthly companions, and devilish practices, to join the Saints of Christ, and to pursue his journey to heaven, in the paths of love and holiness: For he arose to live out of himself, to live no longer by his own works of righteousness, but, upon the fulness of Christ, and to glory in him, and of him only. What an amazing? what an instantaneous change is here! But what kind of prerequisites did Saul possess? what sort of terms and conditions had he performed, in order to his conversion, as some ignorantly contend for? Just as many as he himself insisted upon

that other sinners must possess, when he became Paul the apostle of Christ; which are, just none at all. We have just as much hand in procuring our own conversion, as Lazarus had in raising himself from the dead. "Lazarus come forth," says God Jesus, and he obeyed his almighty voice. Sinner, arise, saith the same Lord, and the soul arises from the earth. He who hath heard Christ's voice, has felt the power of his sovereignty.

(7th.) This change proceeded from conversion of the heart to Christ. This conversion was solely effected by the sovereign power of Christ, in causing this wonderful light to shine from heaven. Saul saw the light. In that light, he saw himself, saw Jesus, heard his voice, and believed him, when he said, I am JESUS, (Saul well knew the precious meaning of that Hebrew word to be, THE SAVIOUR) whom thou persecutest. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Surely, Saul must think, what am I about! what mad work am I at. What! persecute Jesus, the precious Saviour, who is in heaven, the God of heaven, and has almighty power to send me quick into hell! Verily this were to kick against the sharpest goads indeed, and to wound myself in the most dangerous part. Thus light from heaven, produces heavenly reasoning. A sight of Jesus, slays carnal enmity against him. Hearing the voice, and knowing the name of Jesus, the Saviour, begets love to him, and delight to do his will. Saul is now come to his right mind, and sober senses. He reasons well. Never in all his life, did he reason so well before. Pray now what hand had Saul in procuring the means of his conversion, this light from heaven, this sight of Jesus, and this voice from Jesus? not the least. No, he was all passivity in the work of conversion to Christ, but after his heart was turned to Christ, he was all activity in life, for the glory of Christ. But, why was this mighty work effected on Saul? The Lord revealed it to Ananias, and he told Saul, the God of our Fathers hath *chosen* thee, that thou should'st know his will, and see that just one (Jesus) and should'st hear the voice of his mouth. Acts xxii. 14. So that all was settled by the election of God, before time; and all came to pass in the fulness of time, according to electing love and covenant grace,

(8th.) Now let us see, whether, like Saul, we have ever arose from the earth. Every conversion to Christ is marked with particulars similar to Saul's. (1st.) This arising was at the command of Christ, says the Lord, *Arise*. How emblematical this, of a poor sinner's arising from his fall in Adam, at the command of Christ's word in the gospel? The Lord speaks, and the dead in sin arise. The dead (in sin) shall hear the voice of the Son of God (in his gospel,) and they who hear shall live.

John vi. 25. Here is his word, arise, shine, for thy light is come; and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. Here is his power. The LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen by thee. Isai. lx. 1, 2. Hath the Lord arisen upon you? have you seen the glory of Christ in the light of the gospel? have you heard the voice of the Son of God, by the gospel? then you know what it is to arise from the earth, from your cursed earthly state, to shine in the glories of Immanuel, to shine in his everlasting righteousness, and in the graces of his Spirit: to stand complete in him, before the court of heaven, and to possess peace, pardon, and justification, in the court of conscience. O, how sweet! how comfortable! how joyful, is this rising, in the experience of the soul! Blessed, and holy is he, who has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power. Rev. xx. 6. O, keep holy the Lord's sabbaths, in commemoration of this arising from the earth, justified, pardoned, and accepted in Christ.

(9th.) We arose from the earth, new creatures in Christ. Blessed be his dear name, he has slain the enmity of our minds against him. We who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in our minds, by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. Col. i. 21. We arise from the earth, not merely to know this as a doctrine, revealed in the word: but also to experience the comfort of it in our hearts. Instead of being alienated from Christ, and enemies to Christ, now Christ lives in our minds; and our minds are reconciled to him, and delight in him. We are never, no never happy, but when we find Christ present to our minds, our minds wholly taken up with him, and enjoying sweet communication of the Spirit from him. Our affections are set upon him, and our wills bow to him. Since we have seen his glory, heard his voice, felt his power, and tasted his love, as Jesus, the Saviour, we cry unto him, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? we no more ask, who art thou Lord? no. We know him in his glorious person, God-man in one Christ, in his peculiar relations, and precious offices, as our loving Brother, tender Bridegroom, watchful Shepherd, almighty King, all-prevailing Priest, condescending Prophet, perfect Justifier of us from all condemnation, and precious sanctifier, to subdue all sin under us, and to perfect holiness in us; and our dear redeemer, to ransom our souls from all sin, and our inheritance forfeited by sin unto us. Thus Christ is all in all to us. We are new creatures in him, and have all in all from him? for we are one with him.

(10th.) Hence, we no longer reckon ourselves, after the flesh, after our earthly nature, our old man. No. Since we arose from the earth, we view ourselves in the light of truth, as God views us, even new creatures in Christ, possessing all in

Christ, the new man, which we lost in Adam the old man. The favour of God is restored to us, and the image of God is formed in us : and God delights over us, blessing us with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Eph. i. 4. Thus being made holy by electing love, we have our fruit unto holiness, by the influence of the spirit of love. Having heard Jesus, been taught by him; and knowing the truth as it is in him, it is our study, delight, and glory, to put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which, after God (the image of God,) is created in righteousness, and true holiness. All this proceeds from our being renewed in the spirit of our mind, and being new creatures in Christ. We delight in the law of God, after the inward man : we groan under sin, and the burdens of the flesh. We wish to have nothing to do with sin, and to live out of the flesh. We long to be perfectly freed from the very being of sin, and to have it totally rooted out of us. For this we look to Christ, live upon him, and cry to him, that his life may be manifested in our flesh, to the killing of sin, subduing our lusts, that the body of sin may be so destroyed in us, that henceforth sin should not be served by us. For we are both the Lord's new-men, and his free-men : new in the spirit, and free in our minds, not to serve in the oldness of the letter, to please our old man, and to puff up our old, earthly nature, by our doings and services ; or to establish our own righteousness, to recommend us to God's favour, justify us in his sight, and entitle us to his kingdom. No. We have arose from all these earthly notions. The light of truth, and the sight of Jesus in his glory, have put us quite out of all conceit with ourselves, what we ever have done, or can do, to any such ends and purposes as these. But we serve in the newness of the spirit. We delight to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, in whom we are perfectly accepted, perfectly justified, enjoy the true favour of God, and have a clear and indefeasible title to his kingdom. All is enjoyed by faith : all is safe and secure in Christ : and therefore we shall most assuredly receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. O this joyful faith, makes joyful work in the heart, and obedient work in the life ! For this faith in Jesus, works by the love of Jesus : works love to Jesus : and from love to him, we delight to glorify God in him. For, we are God's workmanship, created (anew) in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Ephes. ii. 10. O blessed, holy, arising from the earth ! O, may we thus rise day by day, more and more out of our earthly image, our earthly nature ! But,

(11th.) We arise from our earthly companions. When I was one of your jovial ones, I had a fixed hour to depart. No one could scarce prevail on me to exceed it. I used to say my time is come, and I must go. Eternal praises to Jesus that ever the time came, to arise from the earth! That time is come, and therefore we must arise to depart from our vain, earthly companions. Now we have seen the glory, heard the voice, and found the company of Christ; O his company is so sweet, we prefer it above all: we forsake all who know him not, for the enjoyment of his company. But yet we see many, and what loving, lively Christian, is not grieved at it? Who profess to have arose from the earth, yet, can kill a deal of their precious time, in devoting it to the company of carnal persons. What shall we say of such? they give sad evidence of the preciousness of Christ, and of their love of his company. Their state we dare not judge. Their conduct we must condemn and avoid. Most sure we may be, that there is no walking in close-fellowship with Christ, without coming out, and being separated from the men of the world. For lastly, says our dear Lord of Saul, he is a chosen vessel *unto me*. Acts ix. 15. Eternal praises to him, this, this is true of us also. Though not chosen to be apostles unto Christ, yet chosen to be saints in Christ; chosen *unto me*. O what charms are there in that phrase! It is the fountal spring, the foundation cause of all spiritual light, sight, hearing, life, knowledge, faith, hope, love, conversion, &c. all are put into us, as vessels to retain them, and as chosen vessels unto Christ. O what heavenly treasure have we in our earthen vessels! Ever resolve all unto this: ever see all springing from this, that Christ may be all in all to us. Thus, how safe our state, how secure our salvation, and how happy will our souls be? O, how joyful to meditate, that all our blessings in time, flow from our election in eternity; and therefore that love which chose us, will assuredly land our souls in the enjoyment of Christ in glory.

A COLLECT.

O LORD Christ, who art the light, life, and glory of thy people, pray be all this to our souls; that we may love thee, delight in thee, devote ourselves to thee, be followers of thee, and glorify God for giving thee, and the spirit for our knowing thee, to whom be all glory and praise, now and ever. Amen.

The Thirty-second Lord's Day.

LOVE THE END OF THE COMMANDMENT.

Now the end of the Commandment is Charity, (or Love,) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned : from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling. 1 Tim. v. 6.

WHAT lack I yet? wherein do I yet come short? for all things contained in the law, I have kept from my youth up. This was the sober plea, and serious enquiry, of a very discreet youth, who came to our Lord. But Jesus said unto him, one thing thou lackest. What was that? LOVE, which is the very end of the commandment. For, notwithstanding all his doings, and enquiry about eternal life, it is plain that he loved his riches better than God and his neighbour; and preferred them to the hope of eternal life.

From hence we may observe, (1st.) That even natural men may have some serious thoughts about, and make some sober enquiries concerning eternal life. Yea, (2d.) In hopes to obtain it, they may take some pains to be very decent in their external behaviour, and strict conformity of life, to the precepts of the moral law. While (3d.) all their specious doings, result from ignorance, are supported by pride, and proceed from the infidelity of their hearts; and therefore so far from obtaining eternal life, by, or for their supposed good works, they will be sent away, sad and sorrowful from the presence of a heart-searching God, the judge of the secrets of all hearts, as this ignorant, proud, self-justifying, unbelieving youth was from Christ. For, our Lord discovered to him, what he was ignorant of, the secret springs and latent motives of his conduct. (4th.) Let a man go ever so far, in external obedience to the law, in order to obtain eternal life, yet, there will be always somewhat lacking: he will ever come short of the perfection of the law; and when our conscience is at all roused, it will create jealousies, and put the sinner upon the enquiry, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? What lack I yet? There will be always somewhat wanting, where Christ is absent. (5th.) Notwithstanding this specious pretence of working and doing, and this natural desire after eternal life; yet, the doctrine of salvation by the cross, forsaking all and following Christ, to enjoy Christ as the only hope of eternal life, is most irksome and disgustful to legal hearts. For, (6th.) Though they seem always beginning to do, yet they never come to the end of the

commandment love, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

May the Lord help us to turn our thoughts to these words, and sweetly to meditate upon each of these precious blessings, in the order they lie before us; so as to see the comfort of enjoying them, and the folly of swerving and turning aside from them.

(1st.) "The end of the commandment is love." But, why does Paul put love before faith, a good conscience, and a pure heart? do not all these flow from faith? Does not the sinner partake of them, in consequence of believing? Can any sinner have love, while his heart is impure, his conscience defiled, and he himself shut up in unbelief? impossible. For, even the mind and conscience of the unbelieving is defiled—and unto every good work they are reprobate. Tit. i. 15, 16. Why then put love first? Some think, Paul here speaks to Timothy that the end of the commandment, or charge which he had been giving him, was love. But it seems rather that he means the end of the commandment, or the law, is love, by the following verses. If so, here is a kind of spiritual genealogy, reckoning from son to father; or going to the top of a house, and so descending to the foundation. In this sense, let us attend to it. The end of the commandment is love.

(1st.) Love, to God and man, O heavenly plant in nature's soil! Love brings heaven into the soul! All that is contrary to this love, is from beneath, from hell itself; and is earthly, sensual, and devilish. O, Christian! Do you see, and mourn your want of love, and cry to the God of love for the increase of it? this is love in the root. The Lord water it, that it may shoot forth into luxuriant branches, and bear much fruit to his glory, and our souls' joy.

The end of the commandment is love. Does not this instantly remind us of our BELOVED, who is love itself, from whom our love springs, to whom it is directed, and who is, the end of the law for righteousness, to every one who believeth? Rom. x. 4. One would never think of love, without thinking of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. That love which brought him from a heaven of glory, to a cross of shame. That love, which made him become sin for us, who knew no sin; that we sinners might be made righteous in him. Therefore, "we love him because he first loved us." 1 John iv. 19. O, for more knowledge of him, who is the end of the commandment! O, for more love to him who is love itself, and hath taught us the love of the Father, and is himself the brightest manifestation of the Father's love to us. Therefore,

(2d.) Love to God, the Father. The love of a child discovers itself in fearing to offend its Father. There is a secret

jealousy in love, lest we offend the object beloved. A filial fear is ever accompanied with a real filial love. They cannot be separated. Fear may exist without love, but love never exists without fear. And, the more filial love, the more child-like fear. The latter ever keeps pace with the former. If love be fervent, fear will be predominant over all our conduct. Well, christian, how is it with you? Is there in your heart such a fear of offending God your Father, as causes you to be watchful over your heart, and jealous of your walk? Is it the grief of your heart, that ever you offend him? Is it your sorrow, that you are the subject of a nature, which is prone to offend him? do you fear, from day to day, that some spark may fall upon your corruptions, and light up some fire in your nature, the smoke of which may be offensive to the nostrils of your heavenly Father? there is certainly love at the bottom of this.

(3d.) Love in a child shews itself; in studying to please his father. This God expects from all his children; and they being partakers of Christ, their elder brother's nature and disposition by union to him, delight to please their Father in all things. His commandments are not grievous to them, because they are born of God, know, and love him, as their Father. But love makes their corrupt nature grievous to them; because it prevents and hinders the efforts of love in pleasing their loving Father. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would, to please God. Hence the sorrow of love. The Spirit lusteth against the flesh, so that they cannot do the things the flesh lusteth to do, to offend God. Hence the joy of love. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. 1 John v. 3. This the loving heart of a child of God delights to do perfectly and perseveringly, but is sore let and hindered by sin which dwelleth in him. But love manifests itself in striving against sin, and in praying for victory over sin, and that love may have the pre-eminence in all things.

(4th.) The love of a child manifests itself by concern for its distance, and delight to be near its Father. Jesus hath brought us nigh to God by his blood. Ephes. ii. 13. And it is the joy of our souls to live near to God, and our dread to find a distance between God our Father and us. What a holy boldness does nearness to God inspire! This rejoices the loving heart. What an awful shyness does distance from God create? This grieves the loving heart! Love will be urging, "It is good for me to draw near to God," Ps. lxxiii. 28. Love will be crying to God, Draw nigh to my soul. Ps. lxxix. 18. The absence of God is hell, the presence of God is heaven to a heart of love. This is an experienced truth. Do you find it so? then you have the loving heart of a child of God. O may we be longing for

more nearness on earth, till we enjoy our Father's presence in glory. And as we thus love God our SAVIOUR, and God our Father,

(5th.) So we love God the Holy Ghost, our quickener, sanctifier and comforter. It was by his power that we first came to Jesus, knew him, and the Father's love in him. It is by his grace, that we enjoy the love of God: "For, the love of God our Father, is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy Ghost which is given unto us." Rom. v. 5. It was the Spirit that convinced of sin, took of the things of Christ, and shewed them unto us, glorified Christ in our eyes, and our hearts, persuaded us to believe on, and come unto him, as lost and perishing sinners, for pardon of sin, justification from sin, peace with God, and the hope of eternal life. And if we continue to believe on Christ, abide in him, and enjoy fellowship with him: it is because the Spirit abides with us, and keeps faith alive in us, whereby our hearts are purified from other lovers, and preserved from idols. O, if we love the Father and the Son, we must love the Spirit, who taught us to know the love of both, in his word, and by his power. And if we do love him, we shall fear to grieve him, and dread to quench his comforting influences in our hearts.

(6th.) This love is out of a pure heart. A heart purified by faith in Christ. Acts xv. 9. It is amazing, what an efficacy the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, has upon the heart, in purifying it from corrupt lusts, worldly love, self-righteous hopes, and legal dependencies. Our faith simply considered, appears but as a mean grace. But, when viewed as the gift of God, the faith of the operation of God, no wonder its power is so great in us, and its effects so mighty and many upon us. For it is faith unfeigned. Not the pretension to, and feigned profession of, but the reality and power of faith, which brings Christ and love into the heart. It is the blood of Christ alone, which purges our consciences from the guilt of sin, from relying on the dead works of the law, and all our dead confidences, to serve the living God in newness of spirit. Heb. ix. 14.

(7th.) This love is also out of a good conscience. How do we obtain this? many talk very highly and confidently of a good conscience, who know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, while they have a heathenish, blind, stupid, yea, a seared conscience, past all feeling of sin, sorrow for sin, and without the least hope in the friend of sinners. Still they will tell you, they have got a good conscience: they never did harm to any one on earth; and as to God, they always loved him. Here is a blind conscience, that so far from arriving at the end of the commandment, they have not yet begun with it at all; but are dead in their sins, blind in their hopes, deceived in their hearts,

and stupid in their consciences, through the opiates of sin and Satan. Whereas the faithful in Christ, have the answer of a good conscience before God, not on account of what they are in themselves, or of what they have done to please God, to recommend them to his favour, and entitle them to his kingdom; but "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Peter i. 3. This finishing stroke of Christ's work on earth, enters into the faith of our hearts, and the hope of our souls. This makes our conscience good, and keeps it good, and always furnishes us with a good answer to God, taken from the resurrection of his beloved Son, whose work he was ever delighted with, and whose person he was ever well pleased in. This blessed person, and his glorious work, satisfied God, magnified his holy law, and made it honourable; and nothing but this can satisfy any sinner's guilty conscience, and possess it with a good answer towards God's law and justice. O, may our consciences find peace from it, enjoy peace in it, and ever abide by it, looking wholly and solely unto a once crucified, but now risen Saviour. But

Lastly, from "this some swerved, and turned aside to vain jangling." What is this? to be like one who aims at a mark, but shoots wide of it. They entirely miss the mark which they aim at. St. Jude calls them, "wandering stars." Jude xiii. You never know where to look for, and find them. Sometimes, they seem as if they were all for the gospel of Christ; and Christ in the gospel. Presently they are eccentric, quite gone from the centre of gospel-grace and truth. They exalt the merit of works, in opposition to the righteousness of Christ. Cry up man's faithfulness, in opposition to God's; decry the covenant of grace, to make way for their own terms and conditions of salvation: and contend for as many justifications in the sight of God, as their whims and fancies multiply, to the setting aside the finished salvation of the Son of God.

All such talking and preaching is nothing but vain jangling. It is like an instrument out of tune, which gives a discordant sound, which greatly offends the ear, and, as we say, sets the teeth on edge. Such blow the trumpet of an uncertain sound. It is neither the thorough bass of the law, nor the melodious tenor of the gospel. Bishop Latimer used to call it mingle mangle, neither law nor gospel, but a confused mixture of both. The certain effect of such preaching is, that it either makes a distressed, or a deceived conscience. If the soul is truly awakened by the Spirit of God, it is sure to be distressed by such vain jangling. If it is only seeking to satisfy conscience, by its own working and doing; and to establish a legal hope, and self-righteous confidence, it is sure to be deceived into a vain delusion. O how does such vain jangling abound in the present day! How many turn aside to it, and are distressed and

deceived by it ! The Lord keep us steady to the truth, abiding in Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. John xiv. 6.

INFERENCES.

1st. How needful for us, ever to be on our guard against swerving, turning aside, vain jangling preachers and professors ; for we are in constant and great danger from such, of falling from our own stedfastness, losing the sense of peace, the comfort of hope, and the joy of love ; getting into a legal spirit, and of warming ourselves by sparks of our own kindling, and at last of lying down in sorrow. Isai. v. 11. How can we manifest that we do love God and his word, Christ and his gospel, unless we closely abide by their truths, steadily believe them, speak agreeably to them, and walk worthy of them ? without this, profess what we may, real love is wanting. There must be a close adherence to the truth, to walk worthy of it ; there must be a harmony and consistence between our talking and our walking. If men speak things contrary to sound doctrine, how dwelleth the love of God, of Christ, or of the truth in them ? A person who had been the affectionate father of two sons, died and left all his fortune to that son who loved him best, the test of which was to be decided by the judgment of his executors. They thought of several expedients, but at last determined, that the dead body of the father should be set up, and shot at by the sons ; and he who shot nearest the heart, should enjoy the estate. The elder son shot his arrow into his father's body. The younger, fired with affectionate indignation, cried, out in a flood of tears, O let my brother enjoy the whole fortune ! For I could sooner pine to death in poverty, than shoot an arrow at the body of such an affectionate father. The executors, fully convinced of his superior love, gave the whole estate to him. What love can possess that heart, which can shoot an arrow, even a bitter word against the gospel of the grace of God, our affectionate Father, and Christ our loving Saviour ? He who loves the gospel best, shall enjoy most of its rich blessings, and comfortable promises.

(2d.) Christianity is of an internal nature. It enters into the understanding, possesses the judgment, engages the affections, dwells in the heart, and influences the life. Many talk highly about THE TRUTH, and seem to contend warmly for it, while their hearts are cold and dead to any feeling and experience of its soul-ravishing comforts. Yea, some decry all inward feeling and experience, as rank enthusiasm. This is a sad, but clear evidence, that they are strangers to the joy of feeling the heart warm with the love of God, to the experience of the soul being filled with joy and peace in believing, and their spirit enjoying sensible communion with God the

Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ. O, beware of all such who would persuade us out of our religious senses, and our christian feelings, because they have them not. They are like the fox in the fable, who had lost his tail in a trap, and because he was ashamed to appear among his fellows, persuaded them to cut off their tails also, saying, I run so much the lighter without it. So indeed do these unfeeling professors. They run light enough, and fast enough to such bad places, and vain things, which did they possess comfortable frames and feelings of soul, they would not dare to creep to ; and which warm-hearted christians ever totally shun. O may we ever beware of catching chilling damps, and aguish fits from such. Lord warm our hearts with thy heavenly love.

A COLLECT.

O LORD Jesus Christ, who art the end of the law for righteousness, to every one who believes in thee, grant us the comfort of this in our consciences, and the joy of it in our hearts, that we may love thee with a pure heart fervently. O keep us from turning aside from thee, who alone art the righteousness and salvation of us poor sinners ; and cause us to cleave unto thee with full purpose of heart. Cleanse us from our sins in thy blood. Renew us in the spirit of our minds, by thy holy Spirit, and present us to thy Father and our Father, without spot of sin, unto eternal salvation, for the honour and glory of thy precious Name. Amen.

The Thirty-third Lord's Day.

ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty. 2 Cor. iii. 17.

THERE is scarcely a more pitiable sight out of hell, than to see so many wretched creatures, under the slavery of sin, captivity of the world, drudgery of the devil, tied and bound by the chain of their sins, like bond-slaves now, and doomed hereafter to be tied hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness; and yet to hear such wretches ever crying out of their *liberty*, and boasting of their *freedom*! What a sight! What a sound! Pity them we may. Free them we cannot: for they hug their chains, love their slavery, and are as happy on earth, as the devil, the world, and the flesh, can make them. A greater liberty they want not. A higher happiness they seek not. The scales of ignorance blind their eyes; and the veil of unbelief hardens their hearts. Is it not naturally so with us all? Is there any difference between one natural man and another? No matter whether he be called a Jew, or a Christian: A Churchman or Dissenter: Protestant or Papist. Nature is the same in all, and all are the same by nature. And this one text will solve every difficulty that attends this truth, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: (why? because he is wise in his own conceit) neither can he know them, because (he is carnal and) they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. This is the unerring testimony of the judgment of God. It is a most wise, a most rational, and a most accountable determination. For as God's wisdom is foolishness with men: so men's wisdom is foolishness with God. Are you at any time perplexed in your mind, about the present state of men and things? Take this advice. Consult the lively oracles of God. His word will clear up every difficulty, and solve every perplexity. Search the scriptures. Never give them up, nor give it over, till you fall asleep in the arms of Jesus, with the love of the truth in your heart, and the full prospect of glory in your view.

For all the sons of God are delivered from this cursed bondage, into glorious liberty, by the power of the Spirit of the Lord. This we are now led to meditate upon. May the Lord, the Spirit, help us to do it, that we may see our privileges, have a lively sense of liberty in our spirits, and find our hearts so enlarged, that we may most dearly prize it, and love and praise

the Spirit of the Lord, for his blessed work in and upon us. Let us consider this blessed work and its glorious author.

(1st.) The wretched bondage we are delivered from.

(2d.) The glorious liberty we are brought into, by the Lord the Spirit.

(1st.) What are we delivered from? The apostle, in this chapter, treats of the law and the gospel. The former he calls the ministration of the letter of death and condemnation: the latter a ministration of the Spirit, of life, righteousness, and glory. The letter, says he, killeth. Some have called the revealed word of God a dead letter. This is most absurd. There is no one place in scripture, to countenance such a notion, neither of the law of God, nor of the gospel of his grace. But does not Paul say here, the letter killeth? He does. But surely that which killeth another, cannot be dead itself. What meaneth he then? Verily, that the letter of the law killeth all hopes and confidences which a sinner entertains from his obedience to the law. But the Spirit giveth life, ver. 6; that is, the gospel of the Spirit, called the ministration of the Spirit. This, by the power of the Spirit, quickeneth or giveth life to the soul. Then we experience the truth of this, that the letter of the law killeth our every self-righteous hope and legal confidence; and that we have life, by what the Spirit testifies in the gospel, of the righteous-atonement and salvation of the Son of God.

(2d.) But there is naturally a vail of blindness upon our minds, so that we cannot see the purity and perfection of the law. Like Paul, in his pharisaical state, (for we are all Pharisees by nature) we are alive without the law, Rom. vii. 9; there is also a vail of ignorance upon our hearts, so that we cannot understand neither the meaning of the law, nor the gospel: how dreadfully cursed all sinners are, by the law; and what most precious blessings are revealed to, and bestowed upon sinners, by the gospel. But naturally, we neither feel the one, nor desire the other: we fear not the curses of the law, nor care for the blessings of the gospel. For, besides the blindness of our minds, and the ignorance of our hearts, there is also a vail of unbelief upon our consciences. Hence, by blindness, ignorance, and unbelief, we are fortified, with treble proof against the terrors of the law, and the love of the gospel. Thus we are all in covenant with death and hell. Most awful state! most deplorable circumstances! O wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us! will any one here vaunt of his free-will power, and ascribe in the least, his deliverance to his exertion of that? This fully proves his blindness, ignorance, and unbelief, and that he is under the bondage of pride to this hour. Just as well ascribe this deliverance to the power of the

devil For there is infernal pride, in ascribing our liberty to any power at all, but to the power of the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore,

(3d.) He says, Now the Lord is that Spirit : and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. As though he had said, the Spirit of the Lord is in the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. By the power of the Spirit, in and by the gospel, it pleases the Lord to take away the vail of blindness, ignorance, and unbelief. Then we see, understand, and believe truths as they really are revealed in God's word; and our state to be most deplorable, wretched, and hopeless; and Jesus the only Saviour. Mind, it pleased the Lord to take away the vail. Here is the sovereignty of the Lord's good will and pleasure, proceeding from his everlasting love, and electing grace, according to covenant engagements, by the sacred THREE. Here is sovereignty, worthy of the LORD Jehovah to display, worthy the adoration of angels in heaven, and worthy the highest joy, the lowest submission, and the greatest glory of saints round the throne, and of sinners upon the earth. Hear, O hear : admire, and adore, the glorious exhibition of covenant love, and the sovereign display of covenant mercy, towards us sinners, who are naturally in covenant with death and hell. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation ; a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation ; he who believeth shall not be confounded. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." O, how striking and significant of what Paul calls the commandment came, when sin revived and he died, Rom. vii. 9 ; or the pure and perfect law of God, by the power of the Spirit, coming to the sinner's conscience, sweeping away the refuge of lies, his legal hopes, and self-righteous confidence, of which he boasted, (but to which he now becomes dead) and your covenant with death, shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." Isai. xxviii. 16, 17, 18. No, saith the Lord, but in love for you, and in mercy to you, "My counsel shall stand," (all my covenant purposes and sovereign decrees, shall be unfrustratable, they shall all be accomplished, for my people's good, and my own glory) "and I will do all my pleasure," in and upon them, by the power of my word and Spirit; and they shall some and build all their hopes, for time and eternity, upon the sure foundation I have laid for their souls, in the life and death, the blood and righteousness of the Lamb of God. Isai. xli. 10.

(4th.) Thus we are delivered from that blindness, ignorance, and unbelief, which naturally overspread our minds, from the bondage of the legal administration we are all under from the

guilt and power of sin, and from the curse and condemnation of the law to which we are all subject, by means of the gospel of Jesus, through the power of his spirit. This is the glorious work of the Lord. O what glory is due to him! what glory are we ever bound to give him, if we are delivered from this vail of blindness, ignorance, and unbelief, from the yoke of the law, and from the slavery of sin and satan! But mind, pray mind this. Never lose sight of this. This is a deliverance from spiritual bondage, into spiritual liberty. It is effected by the Lord the Spirit. Our spirits are the subjects of it, and we enjoy the blessing and comfort of it, in our spirits, "even Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith." Ephes. iii. 17. "Christ in us the hope of glory." Col. i. 27. See, then, the internal nature and evidence of christianity. It is not any thing outward in the flesh. The flesh profiteth nothing in this word. The flesh is not the subject of this work. Where this freedom is effected, where this deliverance is wrought, the flesh is still the same, full of sin, lust, and unholiness; not at all changed, bettered or improved. Therefore, the flesh ever lusts against the spirit, Gal. v. 17, and wars against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11; hence, though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our war are not carnal (but spiritual,) mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, (the pride, unbelief, and hardness of the heart, through sin and satan) casting down imaginations, (the vain, proud, strong reasonings of the flesh) and every high thing, (every high thought of the heart, which swells up with vanity, and puffs up with lofty looks and haughty airs, as though we were any thing in ourselves, but poor sinners, mere sinners, like other men) that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, (his sovereign purposes, and absolute decrees, to pardon, justify, and save sinners, wholly and solely, from first to last, by Jesus Christ the son of his love) and bringing into captivity, every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. x. 3. Every thought of our nature is evil, only evil, continually evil, the Lord himself being judge. He sees that the wickedness of man, every man, according to the flesh, is great in the earth. Gen. vi. 5. It is the loving, the almighty work of the Lord, to deliver our souls from this state of darkness and wickedness, by translating us into the kingdom of his dear son, Col. i. 13, and thus every thought is brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. The once-captivated soul, being now brought into the kingdom, and under the reign of grace, the reign of Christ, it is his delight and his glory that all his proud, rebellious, traiterous thoughts of the flesh should feel the power of Christ's kingly arm, fall under the reign of his almighty love; be captivated by his sovereign grace, and be subdued, and subjected to the

spirit. Therefore thus saith our Lord, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." That is the word of truth in the gospel: or Jesus himself, who is emphatically, **THE TRUTH**, John xiv. 6, as he after explains it. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John viii. 36. Now do you experience this deliverance? Mind. It is not a point of doctrine only for the head, but a matter of experience in the heart. Though you may see it ever so clearly, and speak of it ever so scripturally, yet this will not avail to present comfort, and eternal salvation, unless the power of it is known, and experienced in the soul, in the enjoyment of fellowship with Christ, and spiritual freedom in him. And remember, there is need to repeat it again, that this liberty is out of the flesh, above the flesh, contrary to the flesh, and is to bring the flesh into subjection to the Spirit. Therefore, the question is not, whether the flesh, corrupt nature, and sin which dwelleth in it be destroyed, so that you feel not any of its lustings, warrings and rebellings? No. Therefore you are not to judge of your spiritual deliverance after the flesh. For if you do, you will make miserable bondage-work in your conscience, and either be miserably deceived on one hand, or miserably distressed on the other. But the question is, do you find a sweet liberty of spirit, in, and from, and with Christ, to believe on him, look to him, live upon him, and come unto him, with all your burdens of the flesh, the ruins of the fall, the sense of your wretchedness, the sight of your hopelessness, and the view of your unbelief, as to that precious Jesus, who delights to save the wretched, exalt the worthless, comfort the distressed, and sanctify the unholy? If so, the Son of God hath made you free indeed. Now let us, more particularly,

(2d.) Attend to the nature and blessedness of this liberty, which we are brought into by the Lord the Spirit. Always keep your eye upon his work, so as to have a right judgment of it. Mistakes here are delusive and distressing. Hear our Lord upon the covenant work and office of the Spirit. "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself—He shall glorify me." (He shall make me glorious in the eyes, and to the hearts of poor sinners) for he shall receive of mine, of my perfect God-head, and perfect manhood: that I am God and man in one Christ, appointed by God the Father, and anointed by the Holy Ghost, to my mediatorial offices, to be the redeemer, justifier, and Saviour of lost sinners; and that in and from ME they shall enjoy glorious liberty and perfect freedom in their spirits, even while they are burdened with, and groan under a body of sin and death, John xvi. 13, 14. The Lord grant us to know more, enjoy more, to rejoice more, and to stand fast

more and more in the spirit of our minds, in the glorious liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free, and be no more entangled with any yoke of bondage, either from the law, sin, the world, the flesh, or the devil ! For,

(1st.) He who is called IN the Lord, is the Lord's free man. 1 Cor. vii. 22. He that is made a free man of the City of London, is interested in all the grants and charters, privileges and immunities of that city. He is free from the master to whom he was bound. His servitude is expired. Just so, we are made the Lord's free men; we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." Ephes. ii. 19. "We are come unto the city of the living God." Heb. xii. 22. We are made free of that blessed city; we are citizens of it, and are entitled in Christ to all the rich grants, munificent charters, precious privileges, and joyful immunities thereof. All, all are ours, being made free by Christ. For we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. 1 Cor. iii. 23. The time of our serving under the law, sin, and Satan, is expired. We were under tutors and governors, in bondage, until the time appointed of the Father. Glory to his rich grace, that blessed time is come. "Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, than an heir of God through Christ." Gal. iv. 5. O, what a precious, glorious freedom is this ! Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, to view this freedom, in its extensive prospect, and to enjoy it in all its divine blessings and comforts. This is our joyful privilege. Let us look to the Lord, the Spirit, and pray him to indulge our souls with it. O, don't let us be content to live below our dignified state, and our exalted privileges ! For, all comes to us by free gift, of free grace. Therefore as such, let us plead daily, yea, constantly plead, for the fullest enjoyment of them. We have not, because we ask not. Says our munificent Lord, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John xvi. 24. O, my free brethren in the Lord, "Ye are not straitened in the Lord, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." 2 Cor. vi. 12. For,

(2d.) "We have freedom of access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. v. 3. Freedom of access to a throne of grace, yea, to a God of grace, who is at perfect peace, reconciliation, and perfect friendship with us. Yea, more, he is a Father to us, has the heart of the most loving father for us, and the hand of the most affectionate father to bestow every blessing upon us, which infinite wisdom sees best for infinite love to give. Therefore, we have the boldness of children, and the confidence in a father, as well as access by faith to him. Access is the

precious liberty to approach God as a father. *Boldness*, is a freedom of speech, yet with a holy reverence, to open our whole hearts to him, to tell him our sinfulness, nakedness, miseries, wants and wretchedness, as poor sinners; and to plead with him, for the sense, comfort, and enjoyment of his Fatherly love, peace and comfort in Christ, by the Holy Ghost. *Confidence*, is a well-grounded, because a scriptural persuasion, that we are the Lord's freemen in Christ, and that our persons, prayers, and performances, are ever as acceptable to God in Christ, as the most beloved child can possibly be to the most tender and affectionate father. Here is a freedom for ye, O ye children of wrath by nature, ye once servants of sin, slaves to the devil, and enemies against God! What say ye to it? What think ye of it? Is it not most marvellous in your eyes, and most joyful to your souls? The very theory of it is so. O, then what must the experience of it be! Nothing less than a heaven upon earth: the transports of glory, while in a world of woe, and a body of sin and death. Good Lord, thy favours surprize our souls. All, all is of grace, the rich, free, Sovereign, efficacious grace of a covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit; therefore, the whole and sole glory is equally due, to the TRIUNE GOD. O, may we freely ascribe it, to-day and for ever. For,

(3d.) We have freedom so to do: both freedom of will, and freedom of spirit. For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. We are made thus willing in the day of the Lord's power to offer free-will offerings. Psalm cx. 3. It cannot be denied, but we all naturally have a *free will*. It naturally discovers itself by all our actions as men: we are free to do every thing, in the power of our will. But the affections have a mighty influence on the will. These are earthly, sensual, and devilish, and the will acts perfectly free, and we act as free agents in following these without controul. Such is the glory of our free will. O, ye creatures of it! See and be ashamed for contending for the goodness of it. King Cambyzes demanded of his counsellors, whether he might not marry his own sister by the laws of the land? They answered, that they found no law which allowed a brother to marry his sister. But there was one that permitted the king of the Persians to do what he liked. Just so, though we can find no one law in the word of God, to allow us in any sin, yet such is the nature of our will that with an air of sovereignty we demand, "who is Lord over us?" Psalm xii. 4. The will, like the Leviathan in Job, is king over all the children of pride, Job xli. 34. The great secretary Walsingham, being consulted by the queen, about monopoly licenses, gravely and smartly answered, we are all the worse for licenses. The licenses which the will takes, is to the distress of our consciences, and the destruction of our

souls. But glory to the Lord the Spirit, he makes our wills free to submit to the Lord's, delight themselves in the Lord, serve and follow him, with freedom of spirit, and cheerfulness of soul, because our affections are set upon Christ, and the things which are above. And never, no never did the most sordid miser, more freely contemplate his gold, satiate his avaricious soul, and with greater joy say unto it, thou art my God; than we, under the influence of the Spirit of liberty, choose God, contemplate the wonders of his everlasting love, the exploits of his sovereign grace, satiate ourselves with God, delight to run the way of his commandments, cheerfully devote ourselves to his worship and service, joyfully keep holy his sabbaths, and be spiritually engaged in them, that we may hear more from him, enjoy more fellowship with him, walk more closely to him, and give greater honour and glory unto him. O, when favoured with the liberty of the Lord the Spirit, how sweetly are our souls carried out in humble compassion, and heart-broken sorrow for our sins, heart-reviving views of the love of Christ's cross, pardon through his blood, justification by his righteousness, and acceptance in his person! Then how joyful our intercourse with God by prayer, when the high praises of the Lord issue from our hearts, and are proclaimed with our lips! When indulged with the liberty of the Spirit, O, how joyfully do our enraptured souls approach the table of our Lord to sup with him, to communicate his love, to rejoice in his salvation, and to give glory to his blessed name: glory with our thankful lips, from our joyful hearts, and by our obedient lives!

Yes, ye Lord's freemen, and women in the Lord, ye cannot be favoured with the liberty of the Spirit, but it will free you from the bondage and service of sin. A freedom to continue in sin, because grace abounds to sinners! the notion was begot in hell, hatched by the father of lies, and propagated by his children on earth. A liberty to delight to walk after the flesh, while enjoying the freedom of the Spirit! A fiend of hell may preach this, but the Lord's freemen, from their souls, detest and abhor it. Yes, for the liberty of the Spirit is the heaven of love, and the meridian of joy in the soul. Would a saint in glory wish to come down from the mansions of bliss, to live after the flesh? impossible! Why? Because it is contrary to the delights of his heaven-born soul; and he is totally delivered from the burden of the flesh. Christ's freemen partake of the same divine nature, and of the same holy joys; and are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12. Yea, they rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. 1 Pet. i. 8. What! and yet wish and delight to live after the flesh? No. Their delight, their joy, their glory, is to be

led by the Spirit, to live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. True, it is a melancholy truth; the flesh, with its affections and lusts, lives in us. This is our sore burden, and daily grief. When it pleased the Lord, he took away the vail of blindness, ignorance, and unbelief, from our hearts; and when it pleaseth him, he will take away the vail of the flesh; or rather, deliver our souls, from the flesh, with all its vileness. This we are waiting for, and expecting. O, then we shall be delivered, perfectly, and for ever set free, from all sin and imperfection; and the creature, the body also, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21. And body and soul, shall be for ever with the Lord.

A COLLECT.

O LORD who displayest thine Almighty power, by effecting thy gracious purposes in and upon thy people, O attract our affections to thee, fix our hearts upon thee, and subdue our proud wills, to the obedience of thine in all things: and grant that we may enjoy thy Spirit's liberty, stand fast, and walk in that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, that we may serve thee joyfully and acceptably in thy beloved, all our days. Son of God, support us under all our burdens, and cause our weak souls to find rest in thee. Lord, suffer no sin to have dominion over us, nor any lust to prevail in us: but enable us now and ever to live as children of the most high God, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Thirty-fourth Lord's Day.

ON CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, AND APPEARING TO PETER.

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.

Luke xxiv. 34.

THE resurrection of Christ is so clearly, and fully attested, by such a cloud of witnesses, as not to leave a shadow of doubt of the truth of it. Do we want clearer evidence, and better proof, to ascertain this fact, than what the word of God gives us? we never can attain them. It is not for want of evidence, that this fact is rejected by men; but through their corrupt reason, carnal prejudices, and an evil heart of unbelief. Their minds are daily convinced of, and they easily admit a thousand truths, about natural things, without one quarter of the evidence which this divine truth is attended with. Therefore, they are justly condemned, for their rejecting this truth of God through unbelief. Nothing is more irrational, and unaccountable, than men's unbelief of God's revealed truths. Every absurdity in life, shall be admitted with ease upon slight evidence: while divine truth, supported by the strongest evidences, shall be rejected with scorn. A strong proof this, of man's natural blindness to, and invincible prejudice against, the revelation of God: whereas, faith is most rational, and accountable. That the mind should be persuaded to believe a truth, upon incontestible evidence, is rational. That it should be influenced by that truth, is accountable.

Put then, to whom are we indebted for removing our natural prejudices, subduing the power of our carnal reason, and conquering our proud, evil heart of unbelief? to no moral suasions; to no eloquent arguments; to no powers of oratory: for nothing short of Almighty power can effect this. Hence the Prophet asks, "Who hath believed our report," of the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, and salvation by him *only*? We preach sermon after sermon, we report, publish, and proclaim, that Christ is the sum and substance of them all, and the sum and substance of your faith and hope: ye sinners of mankind, if ever ye are saved. Yet, who hath believed our report of him? And, as though he answered his own question, by asking another, he enquires, "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isai. liii. 1. The arm of the LORD is his power: the sovereign energy of his Spirit. When this is revealed, the report of the truth as it is in Jesus, makes

its way to the sinner's heart, it is received in the love of it, and it becomes the power of God unto his salvation. O, then every circumstance of the life and death, resurrection and ascension of the son of man, the Son of God, is precious to the soul of that sinner! O, may the arm of the Lord be revealed *now*! may we feel its divine power, and be sensible of his sweet influence, while we are meditating on this precious truth of our blessed Lord's resurrection: that our faith may be strengthened in him, and our hearts rise up to him, and be comforted by him.

The Lord is risen. The joyful fact is established. There is no doubt of it. He hath appeared to Peter. Here is a manifestation of the marvellous love and grace, that dwells in the heart of the Saviour to poor sinners. Their carriage to him, however base, cannot destroy his love to them. This is as marvellous in our eyes, as his rising again from the dead. His love to us was the cause of his death for us. He died for our sins: his resurrection is a proof of his victory over all our enemies, sin, death, and hell. For, he rose again for our justification. Therefore, sin shall not condemn us; death shall not conquer us: hell shall not receive us. For, by Christ's resurrection, we are for ever freed from all, and may, and ought to triumph over all. O! for the power of faith. Both faith, and the power of faith, Lord, are thy gifts. Bestow both on us for thy glory. What a wide field is open before us, for our meditation! Let us improve it, by considering the following things;

(1st.) Christ rose not merely as a private person. Suppose we had read, that Moses, Abraham, or any of the patriarchs, or prophets, were risen from the dead, what would that be to us? Suppose we were told, that the nearest and dearest relative, we ever had in the world, whom we had seen silently entombed in the grave, was risen again from the dead: what profit would this be to our immortal souls? we should rather be terrified at the thought of seeing them, than joyful at the sight of them. They could do nothing to suppress the guilty fears of our conscience, remove the terrors of death from our minds, and fill our souls with a sense of God's pardon and peace; and with a hope full of immortality and joy. But Christ rose as the head and representative of all his beloved people; to obtain all these blessings for them, to secure them all to them, and to make them the happy partakers of all of them. That holy, immaculate, blessed body of Christ; which was nailed to the cross, and hung naked and exposed to shame, with the ponderous load of all our sins, until it expired in anguish unknown to any, and in agony unfelt by all but himself, (for he was made a curse for us) that very body, which was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified, without the gates of Jerusalem, died, and was interred in a tomb of Joseph, and is risen again from the dead.

He died to atone,
 For sins not his own.
 He rose to set free,
 Poor sinners like *me*.

Is this real truth? Do we believe it? What then is the *joy* of this faith? Paul tells us, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 10. Mind, he does not say, reckon sin to be dead in you; no, he knew it was alive in them, was raging, warring, and rebelling against them; and that this was the burthen and grief of their souls. How then were they to find joy in this case? by reckoning themselves as dead unto sin, as though they had no sin in them: entirely, utterly, and everlastingly dead, to all fear of condemnation and death, on account of sin; or that God will ever impute sin to them: or that sin has any damning power over them: that it should not reign in them, have dominion over them; or they have any thing to do with it, to serve and obey sin, any more than a dead corpse. For, O, joyful to hear! O, transporting to believe! We are for ever acquitted and discharged from all sin in the sight of God, and entirely delivered from all condemnation for sin, as though we had never committed any sin, and as if all sin was dead in us, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. For Christ himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. 1 Pet. ii. 24. He suffered all the curse and punishment due to them, in his own body. He died for our sins. 1 Cor. xv. 3. He gave himself for our sins. Gal. i. 4. He hath purged our sins. Heb. i. 3. He is the propitiation for our sins. 1 John ii. 2. He was manifested to take away our sins. iii. 5. By the death of his body, he hath actually, once for all, and for ever, taken away our sins from before God, and from being imputed to us. And by the resurrection of the same body, he is for ever acquitted of all sin, discharged from all sin, and justified against all condemnation for sin. And so are we also, who believe on him, by virtue of our union to, and communion with him. So that we may joyfully sing,

In him complete I shine,
 His life, his death, are mine.

Our sins were his, charged, and imputed to him, and by the Lord. All were laid upon him. "He was made sin *for us*." 2 Cor. v. 21. So that faith can view the crucified body of Christ on the tree, and joyfully say, there hangs all my sins: can behold the dead body of Christ in the tomb, and with ecstatic tears declare, that body died for my sins: can behold the risen body of Christ upon the earth, walking, talking, eating, &c.

and triumphantly say, behold in that risen body my perfect justification from all sin, and my entire freedom from all condemnation for sin, now and for ever, either in the earth or in heaven : in my own conscience or before God. Thus faith will have nothing to do, but with the body of Christ on the cross, in the tomb, and risen again from the dead : it will look to nothing, trust in nothing, glory of nothing but this before God, angels, and men. This is the object of faith : this the joy of faith. But, not only are we to reckon ourselves dead unto sin ; but also,

Alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Is Christ's body risen indeed from the dead ? Long before Christ was born in our flesh, or his human body died on the cross, he preaches this consolation to his church, " Thy dead men shall live ; together with my dead body shall they arise : awake and sing ye who dwell in dust." Isai. xxvi. 18. Awake from your drowsiness. Shake off your sleep. Tune your notes, ye inhabitants of mortality ; who are dust, and unto dust must return ; yet sing, joyfully sing of Christ's dying love, and of his rising power. For his resurrection is the life of joy to our souls. For as verily as Christ is risen from the dead, all who believe this truth, are alive unto God : our souls are alive to bless and praise God. Our hopes are alive to rejoice in God ; for we have a life of justification before God ; and we live a life of faith upon the Son of God : and body and soul shall be raised to live eternally with God. For, we are complete in Christ : as being mystically, and representatively risen with him, as members of him. " As we are buried with Christ in baptism, we are also risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Col. ii. 12. Is this the faith in our hearts of God's operation ? Is it by this faith we are to live ? Are we by this faith, in Christ's resurrection, to reckon ourselves alive unto God ? Why then, indulge those doubts and fears which deject your mind, and distress your conscience, lest you should not be accepted by God, and justified before him ? Consider, fear is the companion of guilt. Doubts arise from a suspicion of the truth. Now, by both we dishonour Christ : Do you not believe he died for our sins ? Do you think there was any defect in the atonement he made for our sins ? Do you not believe that it was a full, and perfect sacrifice, and satisfaction for sin ? Or do you imagine that you, or any power in heaven or earth, can add to its efficacy, to take away sin from before God, or to remove the guilt of sin from the consciences of sinners ? Do you not believe that Christ is risen indeed from the dead for the justification of sinners ? and, that all who believe in him, are justified from ALL things ? Surely you would start, to suspect the least truth of all this.

What is it then ? I know your reply, just as well as if I could see what is in your heart. Indeed I know your heart by my own. They are both of one and the same bad composition. Therefore, you with me are ready to reply, I do not doubt of the truth of Christ's dying for sin, and rising again for the justification of sinners ; but I am so bad, such a wicked sinner, that I can't think he died for *my* sins, and rose again for *my* justification ; therefore I am in doubts and fears about *my* interest in his death and resurrection. If this kind of reasoning is of any force, and to be admitted as a truth, then the death and resurrection of Christ is only much ado about nothing : for neither the one nor the other, nor both, are of any efficacy, or will answer any end. Did Christ die for *good* sinners : Did he rise again to justify *righteous* sinners ? If so, who are they ? Where are they to be found ? No. He died for bad sinners, ungodly sinners, unbelieving sinners, his enemies ; yea, for the worst, the chiefest, and the vilest of sinners, his greatest enemies ; and he rose again for the justification of such. So bad say you ! The Spirit of truth declares, there is *no difference*, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Rom. iii. 22, 23. We are badness in the extreme ; as far gone from original goodness as possible. Therefore, while we are looking at ourselves, expecting to find a difference in ourselves, and that we are not so bad as others, it is plain that, instead of honouring Christ's love, by believing the truth of his death and resurrection, we are indulging a spirit of pride and self-righteousness. For, in fact, we do as good as say, if I could but entertain a better opinion of myself, then I would readily admit the truth concerning the death of Christ for sin, and his resurrection for sinners ; and hence, instead of being comforted as a mere sinner, by Christ's dying love, and rising power, your comforts would chiefly arise from the good opinion you have of yourself. Hence, as I said before, doubts arise from the suspicion of the truth. This lies at the bottom of all our doubts. Hence guilty fears haunt the conscience. Whereas, if we believe the truth, in its reality, extent, and efficacy, it is sufficient, fully sufficient, to relieve the conscience, support the hope, and yield satisfaction to the most guilty mind of the most desperate sinner upon the earth. But while we are looking within for something to ground our faith, and bottom our hope upon, we neglect the truth, and miss the comfort and joy of faith. Consider this point closely. For, O, the joy of that word, to believe it in our hearts, and confess it with our lips ; the Lord is risen indeed ! By thus believing, and in no other way, we arrive at a comfortable evidence, and joyful assurance of our own interest in Christ's love, and salvation by his death and resurrection. For, " The God of hope fills us with all joy

and peace *in believing*." Rom. xv. 13. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; iii. 16. How are we the children of God? "By faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii. 26. Therefore, we cannot enjoy the witness of the Spirit of truth, with our spirits, but while we believe the truth in our hearts. O! see, then, how unjustifiable all your carnal reasons are against the truth; and how unreasonable your cursed unbelief is of the truth. Therefore, instead of listening to, and indulging of them, we ought stedfastly to oppose and resist them; as being contrary to Christ's glory, and the comfort of our souls; with this cry we ought ever to assail heaven, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. Thus go on believing Christ's love to sinners, till you feel his love in your heart. Let us now,

(2dly.) Consider these words, the Lord appearing unto Peter: Who was Peter? Was he a righteous character, that the Lord should thus honour him more than others? Nay, our Saviour told him, "Thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Get thee behind me, Satan." Matt. xvi. 23. Now what think you of Peter and his goodness? His nature was as bad as yours and mine; and were he here, he would tell us he was as bad, and as sinful a man, as either of us. For here his carnal reason, and devilish unbelief, were opposing the great end of Christ's coming into the world, even to be killed, and be raised again for the salvation of sinners. Well, but how did Peter behave, when the time of our dear Lord's sufferings came on? He had just been receiving the sacrament at the hands of Christ. He told Peter, that Satan had desired to have him, to sift him as wheat; and that before the cock crew, he would deny him thrice. Fore-warned, fore-armed, we say. But what effect had this upon Peter? Why he boldly and confidently declared, "Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Though I should die with thee, yet will I never deny thee. I am ready to go with thee, into prison, and unto death." Brave words! Noble declaration! But if Christ had not foretold it, and Peter's conduct verified it, who could have thought he would have acted directly contrary to all this?

There stands Christ, the dear Saviour apprehended, bound, and surrounded by his enemies, in the hall of the high priest. Where is courageous Peter? close at his elbow? O no! From the place of Christ's apprehension, to this, Peter followed him, but it was afar off. So soon does he begin to discover cowardly fears. However, we may suppose he got a little courage, and *crept* in among the multitude to the hall. Yonder he was in the sight, and hearing of Christ, among the servants,

warming himself. Now comes the trial of Peter's faithfulness and courage. Three times is he accused of knowing Christ and being a follower of him. As often he denies the charge, and even curses, swears, and damns himself if he knows the man. He (1st.) cowardly forsook and fled from Christ, then followed him afar off, then kept at the other end of the hall, not like a bosom friend, but as a distant enemy, and at last perfidiously denies Christ, and persists in it, with oaths and curses even in his presence. Now how aggravating was all this? Here was a disciple of Christ, one who had seen his miracles, had close and intimate conversation with him, just received the sacrament from him, been forewarned of his base conduct by him, professed the strongest attachment to him, and yet after all, lies like a devil, and curses and swears like a fiend of hell. Lord, what is man! what are the highest professors! what is the greatest saint, or chiefest apostle, if left one moment to himself! But yet, bad as Peter's nature was, vile as his conduct proved, he was the object of Christ's love. For Christ loveth sinners. He takes them as he finds them. He died for their sins; therefore, their sins cannot destroy his love, nor damn their souls. He rose again for their justification, therefore, their souls shall be acquitted from all condemnation. Live upon Christ's love, and live above your sins.

Now we have seen Peter's badness. Is your's worse? not at all. Are you better? in no wise. Nay, was you not just now, like Peter, reasoning against the truth, indulging unbelief contrary to the truth, and doubts and fears in opposition to the truth? and if left to yourself, you also would forsake the truth. Yea, and if danger interposed, you too would curse and swear, like a fiend of hell, deny the truth, and that you are of the truth, and have any thing to do with the truth, as it is in Jesus. Therefore, let us deny our goodness, look at our badness, and consider the goodness of the Lord to Peter, and such sinners as we all are. Bad as Peter was, and as Christ told him his conduct would be, yet says Christ, I have prayed for thee. Blessed Lord, was ever love like thine! Glory be to thee, bad as we are, thou still livest to make intercession for us, as *sinners*. Though Peter denied Christ, cursed and swore that he knew not Christ, yet—what follows? was it, "let that lying, swearing wretch go and hang himself if he *will*, and be damned like Judas, for he deserves it. I will have no more to do with him. He has denied me, therefore, I will also deny him?" O No! notwithstanding all Peter's vileness and baseness, which our Lord detested from his soul, yet he loved Peter in his heart, and therefore, Christ looked most affectionately, and most strikingly upon Peter. What was the consequence? Peter remembers, retires, and weeps, yea weeps bitterly. The bitter tears of re-

penitance proceed from the sweet look of Christ: while they discover the bitterness of sin, to the repenting soul! Christ did not love Peter for the sake of his penitential tears. But because he loved him, he looked him into tears. Tears of sorrow for sin against Christ, proceed from love to Christ. And love to Christ arises from his looks of love, and displays of love to us. We can see the smiles of Christ's face in the words of his grace.

Well, Christ leaves Peter weeping bitterly, he suffers the accursed death of the cross patiently, his body dies actually, and is buried accordingly. We hear no more of Peter for two days. He was not at the cross. He is indulging grief and melancholy. Perhaps giving up, and giving over all for lost. His Lord really dead, and he fears his soul damned. But, behold, on the third day, as the prophet sweetly foretels, "After two days he will revive us, in the third day, he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Hos. vi. 2. Torn and smitten, as poor Peter was with grief, anguish, and despondency, yet how graciously did the Lord heal and bind up his distressed soul, (1st.) By a message from his angel, "Go your way, tell his disciples, and PETER, that ye shall see Jesus alive in Galilee, as he told you." Mark xvi. 7. Son of Man! Friend of sinners! God of love! Was ever love like thine! Love that infinitely transcends the height of our most aggravating sins! Love that triumphs over all the aboundings of our basest iniquities! Peter had sinned above, and beyond all the other ten disciples. For though they had all forsook him, yet not one of them ever denied him with oaths and curses. Yet Peter is honoured above them all, by his name being particularly mentioned only, among them all. But why so? did Christ love him most, because he sinned most? No. Be that cursed thought ever as far from our hearts as it was from Christ's. But, our Lord knew he was the most bitterly distressed, and wanted to be most comforted.

Christ knows the workings of our poor hearts under the sense of sin, and the terrors of guilt; and how apt we are to write the most bitter things against ourselves for our sins. Christ knew, had his message been general, tell my disciples, that Peter would have said, "what's this to me? It is impossible that I should be one of that number. For though they all forsook Christ, and fled from him; yet not one of them denied him at all as I have: much less with oaths and curses that they knew not the man, like me. Therefore, Christ will surely deny me, that he is my Lord, and that I am one of his disciples. Base, vile, ruined, lost wretch that I am, I did all this in Christ's presence too. Therefore I must be abandoned to black despair, and suffer the fate of my brother Judas." No, says the loving,

compassionate Jesus, *Peter's* name is in my book of life, enrolled in my heart, engraved upon the palms of my hands; therefore his name in particular must be mentioned in the message. Go and tell *Peter* by name, (but not one word of his lying, cursing, swearing, faithless, cowardly behaviour,) the poor bitterly-weeping *Peter*, that I love him still as well as ever. He is after all my disciple yet. I will see him soon. I will bless him, and make him very comfortable, and happy in my love. "And the Lord appeared unto *Peter*." O, what a wide field for meditation of the Lord's love and grace, does this open into! Copious as we have been, yet the subject is inexhaustible. Loving as the message was, yet the love of Christ exceeds it. Therefore we shall resume this delightful subject in our next meditation.

O! think of the love of Christ to sinners. Believe it under the most distressing sight and sense of your guilt and unworthiness of it. Rejoice in it, when you have nothing within you to support your heart, and comfort your soul. His death proves his love to sinners. His resurrection confirms it. His appearance to *Peter* after all his base conduct establishes it, against all the evil of sin, the efforts of Satan, and the workings of unbelief.

A COLLECT.

O LORD, thou once crucified, but now risen Saviour, raise our hearts and affections up to thee, that we may love thee, live upon thee, and glorify thee, for thy salvation of us. O, that by thy resurrection we may have the answer of a good conscience towards God: and feel thy heavenly love, in all its comforting and sanctifying influences. And be ever found in thee, to the glory of the holy TRINITY. Amen.

The Thirty-fifth Lord's Day.

ON CHRIST'S APPEARING TO PETER.

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Peter.

Luke xxiv. 34.

SUCH a resurrection, and such an appearance, never were before, nor since, nor ever will be, till Christ shall appear in judgment, at the last day. We are deeply interested in the resurrection of Christ as sinners: and his particular appearance to Peter, affords matter full of consolation to us, as fellow sinners with Peter. Our concern in the resurrection of Christ, as a most solemn truth, and as entering into the relief of our consciences, and as laying the foundation of our hope towards God we have considered. We also meditated a little upon Peter's bad conduct, and our Lord's great goodness to him, vile sinner as he was. We read, that the Lord appeared to Adam, after his fall. Gen. iii. 8. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, xii. 9; and to Isaac, xxvi. 2; and to Jacob, xliii. 3. Yet, sinners as they all were, we do not read that any one of them ever openly denied the Lord, cursed, swore, and reprobated themselves, if they knew him, as Peter did. Therefore, the Lord's appearance to Peter is the most extraordinary. It is marvellous in our eyes. The Lord make it very profitable to our souls, while we meditate upon it. O, that light may shine from heaven, grace be poured from on high, and the presence of the Lord be with our Spirits, while we are considering our Lord's appearing to Peter. There is certainly something very peculiar and interesting in it to us: or else the Holy Ghost would not have so particularly left it on record. Yea, chiefly, the honour and glory of Christ in his love for, and his dealings with sinners of mankind, are hereby peculiarly displayed. Therefore, this passage merits our deep attention, and our high regard.

(1st.) The Lord hath appeared to Peter. Who was Peter? A sinner by nature and practice. Not one whit better by nature than Judas. He was a child of wrath by nature, even as others. Dead in trespasses and sins like others. He carried about him a body of sin and death, as do others, therefore, he stood in need of the salvation of Christ as much as any other. True; he was one whom the Lord had peculiarly chosen, and called to be his apostle. But still, though called by the grace of Christ, regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, converted unto Christ, a believer in, and follower of him, yet this

did not destroy the being of sin in him, nor make him a righteous person in himself. No. Sin dwelt in him. He inhabited a body of sin and death. He was like other men, a sinner: prone to sin. For the seeds of every sin were in his fallen nature, his flesh. This discovered itself in a variety of instances. (1st.) He savoured the things that be of men, and not of GOD: for which Christ reproved him. For Satan got an advantage over him. And the Lord said unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me." Matt. xvi. 23. Our dear Lord could not bear Peter's language. Satan put it into Peter's heart, and borrowed his tongue to say, "that be far from thee, Lord," to be so cruelly treated by thine enemies. Not considering, that without Christ's sufferings and death, all whom he loved, as friends, yea, as his very members, and dearer than his own life, must have perished everlastingly. Here the heart and tongue of a sinner are discovered. If at any time you feel within you any workings which are contrary to Christ's love, reject them: but do not let them cause you to suspect the love of Christ to you.

(2d.) Peter stood in the same need of Christ's prayers, as other sinners. "Behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, but I have prayed for thee, says the great High Priest of our profession, to Peter, that thy faith fail not." Luke xxii. 32. Peter was equally exposed to Satan's malice, and to perish in unbelief, as other sinners are, but for Christ's prayers. O, what joy to poor sinners, to believe that Christ is praying for us above, therefore Satan shall not have dominion over us, nor unbelief finally prevail against us on earth! This kept Peter's soul as in a garrison, as he expresses it, "through faith unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. For the all-prevailing prayers of our Mediator procure the almighty power of GOD for us, against unbelief within, and Satan without. Hence Peter's faith did not fail finally as a saint in Christ, though he fell awfully as a sinner in himself. In your worst frames and feelings, let not go your hope in Christ, for he changeth not. His love is ever the same. Whom he once loves, he loves to the end.

(3dly.) Though so clearly and plainly forewarned of his danger, foretold of his conduct by his Lord, how basely he would forsake him, and how treacherously deny him, yet, behold what self-righteousness, self-exalting, self-confident pride, he was the subject of, and with what a bold and imperious air he delivers himself to Christ. Though all men, even these thy disciples around thee, and all the men in the world who profess to know and follow thee, should be offended at thee, and deny thee, yet were I sure to stand alone, and be the only one left to stick by thee, I would never, no never be offended at thee, or prove myself so averse to thee, as ever to deny thee. Now was

not here the daring unbelief of the sinner, as well as the spirit of pride and independence of a devil? Yes, so very daring was his unbelief of the truth of his Lord's prediction concerning him, that he flatly contradicts him, and as it were gives Christ the lie to his face, saying as much, "I never can be, I never will be, that monster of a wretch, that base, perfidious monster in iniquity, as you have represented I shall be." It is impossible that I, Peter, who am thy disciple, who love thee, have just now been communicating with thee, and am determined to live and die by thee, should ever do as thou hast said, deny thee, yea deny thee, before the cock crows to-morrow morning." O, do we not see the corrupt man, the fallen creature, the sinner here, displaying the deceitfulness of his heart, the pride, self-righteousness, and self-dependence of his Spirit! need we go one step farther to discover, that Peter was like other men, a sinner as we are? Yet Jesus loved him. Bad as we feel ourselves, yet, why should we doubt of Christ's love? But

(4th.) A most dark scene opens to our view indeed, which represents poor Peter in the most sable colour; and which fully proves Christ to be the GOD of truth, and Peter—what shall I say? a cowardly man? More. A perfidious man? More. A self-deceiving man? More. A vain self-exalting man. Yea, more. Nothing less than a lying, cursing, swearing man, to a most execrable falsehood. Here he exceeds in sinning what our Lord had been foretelling him. We do not find that Christ told Peter he would deny him with horrid oaths and dreadful curses, but Peter did this also. Say now, must we, or must we not rank Peter in the black catalogue of sinners with ourselves? Was he one whit more deserving of the love of Christ than we? Nay, I will go farther, and ask, even than Judas? But Christ's love does not go by desert, but by choice. That was Peter's mercy, and that is ours also. If we determine by desert, where must Peter, where must you and I appear? what then had Peter to boast of; or trust to in himself more than any other sinner? nothing but the love and faithfulness of his Lord.

But why thus rake into the ashes of Peter? why so magnify his sins, and make his offences abound? Is it to find an excuse for our sins, to justify our bad conduct, and to encourage us to live in sin, that grace may abound? Far from it. Let the thought be for ever detested with the utmost abhorrence from our very souls. And it certainly will if we love the Lord. But indeed, so totally vicious is our corrupt nature, that there is no cursed licentiousness but what it is inclined to. Therefore, we ought ever to watch against it, and pray to the Lord, to keep us from the evil of it. For, it is by his power alone, that we stand one moment. It is of his grace alone, that we

are saved from any sin. And it is of his love alone, that we are raised from any falls into sin, and delivered from the snares of the devil. And therefore to exalt this sovereign power, magnify this rich grace, extol this unmerited love of Christ to us poor sinners; and to encourage a strong trust, and excite a lively hope in him, though we have a hell of sin, the seeds of every sin in our flesh, are fallen nature, we have been exploring the depths of Peter's sinfulness, and considering him as our fellow sinner, and brother in iniquity, and the evil deserts of sin. It is this which exalts the loving kindness of our God and Saviour, in his appearing to this poor sinner. This awfully-fallen, and dreadfully-backsliding sinner, Peter. Were he here, would he be offended at this? No. He would object to our colouring, and say, that we had not painted him half so black as he really was; but that he is now incessantly praising that Jesus, who washed him from his sins, in his own blood. Let us now,

(2dly.) Consider our Lord appearing to Peter. Say, was it not,

(1st.) An undeserved visit? At the salutation of the blessed virgin to Elizabeth, the babe leaped in her womb, and she cried out, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Luke i. 43. At this visit from his Lord, O, how must Peter's heart leap for joy within him! Surely, he must be ready to cry out in the greatest astonishment, "Whence is this to me, that my Lord should appear to me, that he should visit me! what am I? what have I done to deserve this? It was but last Saturday morning, that I was denying him, cursing and swearing that I did not know him, and yet that my Lord should appear to me! Deserve it! O, if I had my deserts, hell must have been my doom! Thus it ever will be. The Lord's visits of love to us poor sinners, will make us reflect upon our sins and follies, cut off all thoughts of any merit or desert in ourselves, and cause us highly to prize, and exalt his favour, in visiting our souls, as totally undeserved by us. O, for more of these unmerited visits from our Lord! That poor sinner, who can talk of, or plead for, any merit in himself; or any merit in any works done by him, seems to be an utter stranger to himself, and unacquainted with any visits from the Lord Jesus.

(2dly.) It was a loving visit. Christ's appearing to Peter was not procured by his love to Christ, but it proceeded wholly from Christ's love to him. True, he wept bitterly for his sins, but Christ's look caused that; and that look of Christ's eye, proceeded from the love of Christ's heart. As soon ascribe your sins to be the cause of Christ's love, as suppose your repentance for your sins to procure the love of Christ. No. It is because Christ loves our persons, and hates our sins,

therefore he gives us repentance for our sins, that we may be happy in his love. And after we have fallen, and he has visited us with repentance, caused us to hate our sins, and to weep bitterly for our sins, then, in love to us, he visits our souls in love. So Peter found this appearing of Christ a most loving visit to his soul. And though before he fell, he was full of talking high of his love to Christ, and of going into prison, and unto death for him, yet after Christ's appearing to him, when he asked him, lovest thou me? did he say? my heart is as full of love to thee, O Christ, as ever it can hold, as some poor sinners talk. O no. But he refers this to Christ's knowledge, and only simply replies, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." John xxi. 17. O! that we may live more upon the love of Christ to us, and be ashamed for want of love to him!

(3d.) It was a surprizing appearing. How must Peter be astonished, like one thunderstruck, at the sight of his Lord? The very report of Christ's being risen again, made his disciples astonished. Luke xxiv. 22. But what must the sight of him be to Peter, who had just before denied him? Surely, like Paul, when Jesus appeared to him, and spake to him out of heaven, "he trembled, and was astonished." Acts ix. 6. Consider who it was that appeared to Peter. No other than the Lord, the God of the whole earth: The judge of quick and dead: God in our nature: God in that very human body, which but a few days ago was crucified, dead and buried. O! how surprizing to see him alive again, with the print of the nails, which had been driven through his precious hands and feet, "for the Lord shewed them." John xx. 20. But, for that precious, loving message which the Lord sent to Peter, owning him by name, as his disciple, one might think the surprize must be too great for him to sustain: Surely he must have sunk under it. But the love of the everlastingly-glorious God, shone with peculiar grace in the face of the MAN Christ Jesus. This supported the surprized soul of this poor sinner. Surprizing as the Lord's visits are to his people, whether by prosperity or adversity, they are all in love and grace to their souls; for God, in Christ, is perfectly reconciled to them, and at peace with them. This is the support, the glory and triumph of our souls. God does not appear to us as an absolute God, in wrath with us, and armed with vengeance against us, for our sins; but he graciously shines in our hearts, and gives us to see the Glory of God, IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Dear Lord, thus surprizingly visit us, thus appear to us, thus manifest thyself to our hearts continually, that we may glory of thee, and rejoice in thee constantly!

(4th.) Was it not a comfortable appearing? Yes, infinitely more so than the clear shining of the sun in its meridian glory,

after many dark and tempestuous days. Yea, more comforting than the visit of an earthly monarch, in all the glory of his majesty, to pardon and set at liberty, from a dark dungeon of despair, a rebel doomed to die. Comfort unspeakable, joy inexpressible, must surely fill the heart of poor Peter, at the sight of his ever-loving God and Saviour. Do you possess the same wicked nature as Peter did? Has the Lord Jesus appeared to your soul, in the vision of faith? Has he visited you in Spirit, as a risen Saviour? Has he in love spoke death to your fears, peace to your soul, and pardon for your sins? Then you also know somewhat of the same comfort, which Peter felt, when the Lord appeared to him. You also have been favoured in Spirit, as Peter was in the flesh. He beheld the God-man Christ Jesus, with his bodily eyes. You have seen him by the eye of faith; the eye of your mind, appearing in the gospel. One is not less real than the other. One is as really comforting to a poor sinner's soul, as the other; but you and many may be ready to say, O, that I were but as sure that Christ loved me as Peter was! O, that I had such a clear evidence, and strong proof of his love, as Peter had! how happy, how joyful would this make me! Would it? Here is a blessed criterion to know it by, St. Paul speaks of "loving the appearing of Christ." 2 Tim. iv. 8. Do you know any thing about this matter? It is as impossible for any sinner upon earth to love the appearing of Christ to judgment, as it is for a devil in hell, unless Christ hath first appeared precious to the soul by faith. Is Christ precious to your soul? Do you as a lost and miserable sinner, see such preciousness in Christ, that the desire of your soul is towards him, and to the remembrance of his name? Is his name Jesus precious? Is his person as God-man precious? Is his death and resurrection precious? Do you wait upon him, and long for precious visits from him? Do you feel yourself miserable without him? Do you cry unto him? Lord visit me with thy salvation, that will put joy and gladness into my heart. Then, as verily as Christ appeared to Peter, he hath appeared to you, in the grace of his word, and the power of his Spirit. And, as surely as he loved Peter, he loves you. Yes. You may be perfectly assured of it. Your view of him, desires after him, cry to him, and love to the appearing of him, all proceed from his love to you, and his grace given you. Because, "He now appears in the presence of God for you." Heb. ix. 24. Therefore he hath put these love tokens in you. Let your soul take the comfort, and give your Lord the glory of this. Christ's loving heart delights in comforting distressed sinners, without looking for the least merit in them, or expecting the least worthiness of his love from them. This appears clearly in his

conduct to Peter. Therefore, look no more for your goodness, than to your badness as the cause of Christ's love, the foundation of your hope, the source of your comfort, and the spring of your joy; but look wholly to, live wholly upon, rejoice constantly in the love of Christ to sinners, and his appearance for their salvation in flesh on earth; and before the presence of God in heaven. Thus come self-emptied to the Lord, to receive out of his inexhaustible fulness, grace upon grace: one favour after another, even until you are filled with all the fulness which is of God in glory. But meanwhile remember, we are called "to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." Col. i. 10.

Lastly, it was a sanctifying visit. It revived Peter's love. All sanctification proceeds from love. All love from faith. Sanctification is begun in faith, by union to Christ. It is carried on by communications from Christ. And it shall certainly be consummated by the Spirit of Christ. This we may be fully assured of. No one member of Christ can possibly perish for want of holiness, as some ignorantly speak. Why? because Christ is our life of sanctification. "He is made of God, sanctification to us." 1 Cor. i. 30. For he says, "I came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John x. 10. "And because I live, ye shall live also." xiv. 19. And life of holiness on earth, and happiness in heaven. "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. i. 6. "Therefore we are bound to give thanks always unto God, because God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13. Therefore it was that our Lord appeared to Peter.

O! how joyful to argue from our belief of the truth, and sanctification of the Spirit, in time, up to our being chosen of God to salvation from the beginning, before time: and from our election in eternity to salvation, down to our being sanctified by the Spirit, through the belief of the truth, in time! O, how does this excite thankfulness in our hearts, to the sacred Three-one JEHOVAH! Whereas those who do not believe this doctrine, know not the comfort of it, therefore cannot give thanks for it. Thus unbelief robs God of the glory and praise which are ever due to him. True, if it be left to us to sanctify and make ourselves holy, in order to be saved, (as some talk); then indeed the glory is ours. But if the issue of salvation be put upon this, I am sure no flesh can be saved: all must perish. But glory to thee, O LAMB of GOD, that this is not our comfortless case. This work is thine, and we look to thee to carry it on, and finish it.

Look at Peter. How did he carry on his own sanctification? Yet Christ appeared to him, after his wretched conduct. Let this excite you, under the sense of all your vileness, to look wholly to Christ for sanctification, as your living head of influence. Those who think they can do better than Paul did, in regard to sanctification, are deceived by vain confidence, just as he was. Those who assert that they are workers together with God in sanctifying themselves, (any further than using all means in our power, which we are ever bound to do) add pride to their folly. This pride counteracts sanctification; because it is contrary to humble faith. Hence we hear of two justifications before God: one by Christ, and another by the merit of their own works. With such, it is as natural to talk of two Saviours, Christ and themselves: two righteousnesses, Christ's and their own; two sanctifications, Christ's and theirs; and with equal propriety, two Heavens also; one which Christ has prepared, and another which they have merited. But blessed be his dear name, we have not so learned Christ, if so be we have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. Our merits are as strange language to us as transubstantiation. And we equally detest the one as the other. For we know we have no merits; and that we could as soon redeem ourselves from all iniquity, as justify ourselves before God, or sanctify ourselves unto God. No, thou dear Saviour, all is from thee. O help us ever to glory in thee, and of thee, give all the glory unto thee, ever look and cry, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation." Ps. cvi. 4. A visit from Christ, powerfully assimilates the soul, into the image of Christ. Though we cannot effect this, yet we delight in it; and ought to use all means to obtain it. For we cannot see, know, and believe in Christ, but we must love holiness, and hate iniquity, after our inward man. The very first sight and knowledge we had of Christ by faith, effected this; every repeated visit of Christ increases it. So Peter found it: Christ's appearing to him, gave his soul a precious lift to holiness and heaven: so it does ours, when he graciously condescends to visit us, in the vision of faith, by the spirit of his love, so that we cannot refrain crying, Lord repeat thy visits over and over again.

A COLLECT.

O God, thou Saviour of sinners, visit our souls with thy grace, that we may walk in the light of thy truth, the comforts of thy love, and the joy of thy salvation, now and ever, to the glory of the ever blessed TRINITY. Amen.

The Thirty-sixth Lord's Day.

ON HUMBLE WALKING.

—*And to walk humbly with thy God!* Micah vi. 8.

THIS is an appeal from the LORD of Heaven, to sinful dust and ashes upon the Earth. There is not a text in the bible so awefully hackneyed, and so shamefully punned upon as this. It is at the tongue's end of every carnal man. It is their very creed. They make short work of the whole of Christianity by quoting it, and by vainly imagining that they fulfil it, and all is safe and secure. For, say they, "What does God require of us, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our GOD? Thus the father of lies, through the means of corrupt teachers, sews pillows under their arm-holes, buoys them up with false hopes, makes them rest easy and secure in their sins, and if grace prevent not, leads them blindfold to hell. For, they are as utterly ignorant of the meaning of the text as a magpie; and as far from complying with it, as a mule. True, the Lord doth require this of us: and it is as true, if the salvation of sinners was put upon our perfectly fulfilling it, no flesh could be saved. But blessed be the LORD of all grace, salvation is put upon a quite different issue. It is fixed upon the grace of a sinless MAN, who obeyed this text in its utmost perfection; yea, fulfilled every command of God's holy law, to its utmost extent. Therefore, we take up no command upon a legal footing, to make us righteous before God. That is done, for ever done. To the praise of the glory of God's grace, we are accepted IN the beloved, as being made righteous IN him. Yet the Lord requires, and we delight to hear him in faith, and are joyful to obey him in love, **WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD.** Let us consider,

(1st.) What is implied in this.

(2d.) The reason for it.

(3d.) The blessedness of it.

O, for a clear, unclouded view of gospel grace and truth, and for an evangelical spirit, to hear, receive, and be conformed to what the Lord requires, that we may obey him in all things, through the power of faith, and in the comfort of love!

(1st.) What is implied in walking humbly with thy God?

(1st.) A proper knowledge of ourselves: and (2d.) A scriptural knowledge of God. (1st.) A proper knowledge of ourselves; we call it proper, as being fit and suitable for the purpose of

humility, and without which we can neither be humble, nor walk humbly; and this knowledge must enter into the seat where pride is, even the heart. It is from thence all pride springs. It is there humility must take root, and bear fruit. Walking humbly, is the fruit of humility, as walking well, is a sign, or fruit of health of body. Is your soul then made alive to God, through Jesus Christ? Are you called to him? Do you believe on him? Are you justified in him? Verily, this loudly calls for the highest praises, to the God of all grace; and not less for the deepest humility before him. For remember, let us never forget this, that though we are so highly honoured, and so signally distinguished, as to be beloved of God, and chosen in Christ before time, and called to Christ, to be justified, pardoned, made righteous, accepted, and saved in time; yet we are all this, and have all this, only IN Christ. Though we enjoy the knowledge, and experience the comfort and blessedness of all this in ourselves, through faith; yet know, to your deep humility, you are in yourself, just that proud, sinful, vile, poor, blind, miserable, wretched, and naked creature, as you was, before the Lord called you, and Christ embraced you. Yes, there is no difference in your fallen nature, from the most apostate, and abandoned of all the sons of men. Holy Paul confesseth, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Rom vii. 18. Where no good dwells, no good can proceed. Our Lord tells us what proceeds out of our hearts, "Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness-es, blasphemies." Matt. xv. 19. A black catalogue truly! Fine creatures, with such hearts, containing such a brood of the vipers of hell, to entertain a good, high, and proud opinion of ourselves! That we do not see, know, and feel all this, and therefore are not humble, is because of our *evil thoughts* of ourselves, which are contrary to God's truth; and the *false witness* we bear of ourselves, in opposition to what his word testifies against us. Is not here cause enough for humility, and to walk humbly with God?

God hath so ordered it in nature, that creatures of the greatest excellency, should have some manifest deformity. Among birds, the peacock, though it hath the gayest feathers, yet hath the foulest feet. The swan hath the whitest feathers, yet the blackest skin. The eagle hath the quickest sight, and the highest flight, yet is the most ravenous, foul feeder. Among beasts, the lion is the noblest, but is fierce, cruel, and voracious. The fox is the most subtle, but has the foulest smell. So in God's own dear people, though they partake of many excellent graces, yet he suffers the corruption of nature, or a nature full of corruption, a body of sin, to be in them all, to humble them. So that humility, the best of graces, springs from the worst root,

our original sin, lusts, and corruptions: though not naturally and properly so, but by the influence of God's grace. He shews us what we are to humble us. He convinces us of sin, to keep up the view of ourselves, and to make us walk humbly with him. And he gives us,

(2dly.) The scriptural knowledge of God. I call it scriptural knowledge: for all other knowledge of God, is only mere speculation, and pompous ignorance. But the scriptures reveal God in the most clear and comfortable view, to us guilty creatures; as a God in Christ, "Not imputing our trespasses to us," 2 Cor. v. 19: "But forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Exod. iii. 4, 7. "Reconciled to sinners, and reconciling them unto himself. Justifying them before him; and at perfect peace with them." Rom. v. 1. "And freely giving eternal life to them." Rom. vi. 23. Why all this? "Because the Son of God in our nature, was made sin for us, and we are made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. "Our sins were laid upon him." Isaiah v. 3, 6. Righteousness is imputed to us." Rom. iv. 24. "He is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," Jer. xxxiii. 16. We have a perfectly righteous character in Christ only, to appear in before the throne of God's justice. By faith we receive this truth of God. And, O how joyful is this, to our sin-sick hearts, and pained consciences! Having this proper knowledge of ourselves, and this scripture knowledge of God, he requires us, and we delight to walk humbly with him. But without this it is as possible for a devil to walk humbly with God, as a sinner. For, without faith, believing God to be, what he has revealed himself in his word, we cannot come to him, and walk with him; and it is impossible to please him. Heb. xi. 6. This implies spiritual life; and the whole of our conversation, conduct, and deportment in that life, that it should be regulated by, and agreeable to, that knowledge we have of God, and ourselves: to humble ourselves in walking. The more we walk, and the farther we go, in the divine life, we get more knowledge of ourselves, and more humility before God. Let your mind be exercised upon, and influenced by this knowledge. That God has a sovereign right to command what he pleases from you, to say what he pleases of himself to you in his word; and to do what he pleases with you, in the dispensation of his providence; and that you dare not, you ought not, you have no right to question his word, nor arraign his conduct. For who art thou, O man (sinful man, a creature of yesterday, dust to-morrow, a worm of the earth) that *thou* shouldst reply against God? Rom. ix. 20. This it is to walk humbly. But pride works in us directly contrary to all this. Spectacles for an ancient sight, if used by the young,

make objects appear less than they are. So pride makes sin, God's truths, love, mercy, grace, goodness, promises, and threatenings, less than they really are. But humility, like spectacles suited to the sight, magnifies objects, makes sin appear exceeding sinful, the sinner exceeding vile in his own eyes, and God exceeding precious in Christ, in the word of his grace, the declaration of his truths, the promises of his Gospel, and in the dealings and dispensations of his providence. Pride makes a man think no one better than himself. Humility causes a man to judge no one worse, nay, not so bad as himself. Therefore, while the one exalteth himself on high: the other, layeth his hand on his mouth, and "his mouth in the dust." Lam. iii. 29. And is ever crying out, God be merciful to me a sinner! Lord pardon me, an unprofitable servant.

WITH—THY—GOD. Each of these words demand our deepest attention. WITH: It is not before, or in the sight of thy God, though this is equally true: but it is, WITH thy God; nigh to him: in close company with him. O, ye angelic hosts! Ye cannot conceive this wonder of love! O, ye saints of the most high God, ye cannot express this miracle of grace! For sinners, enemies to, and rebels against God, who were at the utmost distance from God; to be brought nigh, yea, to have close fellowship, and walk in company *with* God, the whole God-head, Father, Son, and Spirit. O most joyful! May it elevate us with the highest joy, while it sinks us into the lowest humility! "For now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are (not for any worth, or worthiness in us, but) made nigh by the blood of Christ." Ephes. ii. 13. Being thus made nigh we walk nigh with God. He hath delight in us. We have pleasure in him, while we glory in the blood of Christ, THY GOD: thy Elohim: *thy* God in covenant, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: *thy* Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier: who hath loved *thee*, chosen *thee*, redeemed, justified, and saved *thee*; who will never leave, nor forsake *thee*, but will comfort thee in love on earth, and crown thee eternally in heaven. God, in all his glorious persons: God, in all his adorable perfections: God, in all his covenant love, electing grace, sacred counsel, solemn oath, precious promises, and providential dispensations. The most high God, the great, the most mighty God, the LORD Jehovah, is *thy* God; therefore, walk humbly with *thy* God. But let us consider,

(2dly.) The reason for this conduct. Enough has been said, to shew cause for this. It need only be added, THY GOD requires it of thee, and it is thy highest privilege, thy indispensable duty, thy greatest honour, and thy richest mercy. For it is—I was going to say, the *way* to the kingdom; but I correct myself, remembering our precious Christ says, "I AM

THE WAY." John xiv. 6. But I will say, there is no walking in Christ, no enjoying of Christ, but as we are walking with God, humbly, lowly, and reverently. For, we are assured, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. xvi. 18. The Christian's humiliation is Christ's exaltation, and God's glorification. Call to mind what thou wast, a sinner, at open war with Heaven, and in arms of rebellion against the most High God. Know thyself: What art thou now? A dying creature, a living sinner, with a world of iniquity in you, and a mass of corruption about you. What hast thou that thou didst not receive? What dost thou hope for, but what is of free promise, of free gift, of rich grace? And, therefore, if you are walking humbly, the Spirit of truth hath drawn your picture to an exact likeness. A weak, hopeless, helpless, decrepit sinner, coming up from your wilderness state, and from this wilderness world, "Leaning upon your beloved." Song viii. 5. Therefore,

(3dly.) Consider the blessedness of this walking humbly with God. (1st.) We find our minds subjected to the sovereignty of God, as revealed in his word. There is nothing more clearly revealed in Scripture than this. And there is nothing so mortifying to our proud natures, nor which they are more offended at, or kick more against than this. It is in our very nature to arraign God's justice, object to his truths, re-judge his purposes, call in question his counsels and decrees, and think hard of his conduct and dealings with the sons of men. But why? Because we are so ignorant, that we cannot reach their heights, nor fathom their depths, by the short line of our corrupt reason, nor reconcile them to our judgment, and therefore the pride of our hearts rises with indignation against them, and we cry out, with daring arrogance, "Away with them. I will never believe them; My reason cannot comprehend them. I will never submit to them." Hence one man robs God of his sovereign right to choose whom he pleases to partake of his grace, and dwell in his kingdom. He deifies his works and merits; and undeifies God of his supreme power, and sovereign choice. And boldly declares, he would as soon believe the grand Turk to be God, as believe in such a God as this. Another robs Christ of his personal and essential deity, his perfect atonement and everlasting righteousness. Why? Because it appears absurd, that a man like unto ourselves in all things but sin, should be also truly and properly, **Very God, of Very God.** And he believes, O, horrid to mention! that there is as much virtue in the blood of a calf to atone for sin, as in the blood of Christ. And, as to us sinners being made righteous, by the perfect righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, of all the

monstrous absurdities ever advanced, this he looks on as the very greatest. As to the efficacious grace, operation, and influence of God the Spirit, to the purposes of eternal life, in all the redeemed of Christ, who can bear to hear of this; Is it not esteemed, as the very quintessence of madness and enthusiasm?

(2d.) But why all this? Why are these most plain, Scripture truths objected to, and rejected by the generality of men? Even from one and the self-same cause in all, pride. Hence they do not "submit to the righteousness of God." Rom. x. 3. They dare to reply against God, for this plain reason, because God's truths oppose their carnal reason, God's sovereignty their corrupt judgment, Christ's deity their natural conceptions, his atonement and righteousness, the dependence they have upon their own works of obedience: and the efficacious work of the Spirit upon the heart, according to sovereign purposes of the everlasting covenant, is diametrically opposite to their proud notions of their own free-will, and the high opinion they have of their own ability, to make salvation effectual to their own souls. Therefore, as God works all things, according to the counsel of his own will; so all who do not walk humbly with God, oppose his will, by the counsel of their own will.

(3d.) Now, what a great mercy, what an unspeakable blessedness is it, to be brought into the lowly spirit and humble temper of our Saviour? For when he beheld the sovereignty of God, in his different dealings with, and distinguishing dispensations among, the children of men, "In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21. O! how blessed, to be of Christ's humble mind and resigned will, to what seems good in the sight of God. All who walk humbly with God are thus blessed by God, they rejoice in the spirit before God, and they give glory unto God, for all his truths and ways. Paul, as one of that blessed number, speaks the language of all who are thus walking. After he had been dwelling much, and contemplating deeply, on the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord, he cries out, in the depth of deepest humility, and in the heights of wonder and amazement, "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways, past finding out! For, of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Rom. xi. 33-36. Thus humble walkers with God, esteem it their

blessedness to adore his unsearchable judgments, submit to his wisdom and knowledge, and give glory to him for all his ways, though past exploring by them. Thus Paul leaves this matter; and thus will all act who walk, as he did, humbly with their God. But the prophet asks, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos iii. 3. A sovereign God, and a proud sinner, are two of the most opposite characters, and must be ever at variance.

(4th.) But, when we humbly bow to the sovereignty of God's truth, submit to his righteousness, and our wills are brought into unison with his will; then we sweetly acquiesce with, and are humbly resigned to, the sovereign dispensation of God's providences, be they ever so affecting or afflicting; saying in all, and under all, with humble Eli, "It is the LORD, my God, let him do what seemeth him good." 1 Sam. iii. 18. I cannot see what is best: He can. I dare not choose. He cannot err. "Wherefore should I, a living man, complain, a man as I am full of sin, for the punishment of my sins?" Lam. iii. 39. Chastisement for sin is the will of my God: and from the love of my Father. He is with me in all. I will walk with him, humbly under all. I have his blessed word, precious promises, strengthening grace, and covenant assurances, to support me through all, and deliver me out of all; and his heaven of love, to receive me after all. O, how unspeakably blessed is this! "It is a joy that a stranger doth not intermeddle with." Prov. xiv. 10. "For, thus saith the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isai. lvii. 15. Happy, humble walkers with God! Again,

(5th.) Humble walkers with God, will be humble conversers with men. It will be seen, that we have been with Jesus, are walking with him, and partake of his spirit and temper. Though we shall not be doves, without the least gall of bitterness in our nature, yet we shall find grace subduing our haughty spirits, conquering our unruly passions, and sweetening our bitter tempers. Though the pride and sinful passions of our nature are not totally eradicated, nor the corrupt tempers of our nature changed into perfectly holy and heavenly dispositions, as some ignorantly prate: for, if this were the case, we should have no need of these, and the like exhortations. "Put on, therefore, (as the ELECT of GOD, HOLY and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-sufferings, &c." Col. iii. 12. And, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking,

be put away from you, with all malice, &c." Eph. iv. 31. From hence it is plain, that these evil tempers are in the *Elect* and *holy* saints of GOD, else they need not be called on to put them away from them; and that the contrary graces are not naturally in them, else they need not be exhorted to put them on. Yet, humbly walking with GOD, we shall find the influences of his love, constraining us to put away the one, as hateful, and to put on the other, as delightful. And whenever we do breathe, act in, and speak from, our own spirit, our hearts are pained with sorrow, bowed in humility, broken by love, ashamed of our folly before the Lord, and we cry unto him for pardon. Humble walking with GOD, will soften our speech, and sweeten our tempers among men; and so shall we avoid the painful misery of strife and contention,* and the wormwood and gall of bitter reflection.

(6th.) Humble walking with GOD, will make us peaceable subjects, good neighbours, affectionate parents, loving husbands and wives, kind masters, dutiful children, faithful servants, sincere friends, and forgivers of our enemies. He who eyes GOD in all, will discharge his duty to all. It will make us love and pity poor sinners, and wish the salvation of their precious souls. Though they are wallowing in their sins, ridiculing and despising us for our godliness, and sporting themselves with their own deceivings, yet we shall not look down upon them with a self-righteous air of supercilious contempt, as the Pharisee did on the Publican; but remember what we ourselves are, who made the difference in state and practice, give GOD the glory, and strive to be instrumental in their salvation. Humble walking with GOD will make zealous actors for our Saviour's glory, and our fellow-sinners' good. Much more might be advanced on the blessedness of thus walking; for verily, much more is found by experience in it. Let us only consider,

Lastly, That humble walking with GOD, will make comfortable dying in the Lord. Nay, do not start, as though I were going to put our humble walking in the place of our Saviour, for us to look at, and trust to for our salvation. No. Be that farthest from my thoughts and yours. But by humbly walking with GOD, we enjoy in our hearts the comfort of GOD the Father's everlasting love, GOD the Son's everlasting salvation, and GOD the Holy Ghost's "everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace." 2 Thess. ii. 16. Humble walkers look at, trust in, and glory of, nothing but this. And if this will not make them comfortable in dying, and joyful in death, nothing can.

A COLLECT.

GOD be merciful to us sinners, who are poor, but yet proud. Lord, humble us for our pride. Make and keep us, ever humble before thee, that we may walk humbly with thee. Empty us of our self-righteous hopes, and fill us out of thy fulness, O Jesu, who fillest all in all, to the glory of the Triune God. Amen.

The Thirty-seventh Lord's Day.

OUR LORD'S CAUTION AGAINST PHARISAISM.

Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is Hypocrisy.
Luke xii. 1.

WHEN any epidemic disorder rages, how glad are we to hear of, and procure an antidote against it, which may prevent our catching the infection. Or if affected by it, how readily do we take such medicines which are prescribed, as remedies to repel its force, and restore health. Happy for us, were we always thus wise, respecting the health and prosperity of our souls. Pharisaism is a very dangerous disorder. Its infection is easily caught, but very hard to get cured of. The seeds of it are in our corrupt nature. They will live in us, and die with us. They are ever ready to be drawn forth into life, and to bring dreadful disorders upon our souls.

Since the fall of man in Paradise, there has not been a single day but this distemper has raged more or less in the earth. No sooner had Adam sinned against, and fallen from God, than he discovered himself tainted with this cursed leaven. It manifested itself by his vain attempt to hide himself from, and his foolish excuse to justify himself before God. Though he had disobeyed his command, lost his innocence, and was stript of his righteousness, yet he aims to avail himself of an expedient and excuse, whereby to justify himself, and retain his righteousness, that he might not appear naked before God. This is as natural to us all ever since as to breathe. The Pharisees are not all dead. Pharisaism was not peculiar to our Lord's days only. It greatly abounds in ours also. That we may obey our Lord's caution, live in his comforts, and walk in his truths, let us consider,

(1st.) The true spirit and genius of Pharisaism. (2nd.) Why our Lord compares this to leaven, and calls it hypocrisy. And (3d.) Why he bids us beware of it. O, that while we are thus engaged, may the Spirit of God be with us, to enlighten our understanding, and teach our hearts to profit!

(1st.) The true spirit and genius of Pharisaism. The whole world, which lieth in wickedness, is divided into these two classes, the openly profane, and the outwardly religious, but inwardly self-righteous, Pharisees. Of whom the Judge of all flesh solemnly declares, "Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots, go into the kingdom of God before you."

Matt. xxi. 31. Why so? Our Lord has presented us with a true painting, and exact likeness of the spirit and genius of the Pharisee. Luke xviii. Here every lineament is clearly and fully displayed. In which we may see, how contrary it is to the spirit and genius of the gospel of the grace of God, to lost and miserable sinners, in these three particulars. (1st.) He trusted in himself that he was righteous. (2d.) That he was not like other men. (3d.) He despised others. Or, in other words, He was full of **PRIDE, SELF-COMPLACENCY, and IGNORANCE.** Let us attend to each of these particulars, and see how hateful they must appear in a sinful creature, and to the eyes of a gracious God. And if we discover any of this spirit in ourselves, that we may humble ourselves before God, and cry to him for mercy.

First. His pride, in trusting in himself that he was righteous. How naturally prone are we all to this? The most profane wretch out of hell, carries some of this same spirit about him. Either what is called negative, or positive righteousness. He either has not committed some evils, which others have; or he has done some good things, which others have not. Hence he entertains a good hope of himself before God. And there is not a saint out of heaven, but is more or less prone to self-righteous views of himself, and to consider, there is something wrought in him, or done by him, which sets him above the rank of his fellow sinners before God, and puts him upon a better footing of acceptance with God, than they. Now in any wise, to trust at all in ourselves, that we are righteous, and to expect favour from God, acceptance with God, and justification before him, on account of any thing we find in ourselves, feel about ourselves, or done by ourselves, is a species of Pharisaism: and to incline to, and indulge it, is to commence a Pharisee. It is to carry the broad mark of pride in our hearts, and upon our foreheads. Pride of the very worst kind; spiritual, infernal, damnable pride. Hence Paul would not have any one to be a bishop who was a novice, (one newly come to the faith, not well versed in the knowledge of his sinfulness, and the self-righteous workings of his own heart) lest, being lifted up with (self-righteousness) pride, "he fall into the condemnation of the devil." 1 Tim. iii. 6.

Did you never feel the working of this self-righteousness in you? how do you treat it? how does your heart act under it? do you cherish it? or loath yourself for it, humble yourself under it, and are ashamed of yourself before our righteous Saviour on account of it? If so, this is a genuine sign of a gracious heart, well instructed in the kingdom of nature, and of grace. There is no evil, even hypocrisy itself, but what is in our flesh, or fallen nature. But this does not constitute us

hypocrites, for we hate it. So of self-righteousness, if we resist, strive, and pray against it, we shun and avoid Pharisaism. Whereas, it is the spirit and genius of a real Pharisee, to live under the power of pride and self-righteousness; to nourish and cherish it; and in all he does to sacrifice to it. For, take away what he is in himself, what he can do towards justifying himself, and he has nothing else to trust in, and rely upon, for hope towards God. For, his self-righteousness ministers to his pride; and his pride keeps up his self-righteous hope in himself; and both keep him from submitting to the one righteousness of Christ being imputed through faith. A Pharisee cannot bear the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, to make him righteous before God. This bears hard upon, and is contrary to,

(2d.) His SELF-COMPLACENCY. O, had you gone to this Pharisee of old, or to any of our modern ones, and said, "Sir, all the catalogue of your works, which you are now enumerating, boasting of, and thanking God for, does not raise you one step higher in the sight of God, nor constitute you righteous, and justify you before him, any more than all the evils of that poor, despised, self-condemned publican yonder, can him." O, how this would mortify his self-complacent, and self-conceited spirit! He would instantly pronounce you a rank Antinomian. This will ever be the case, when men get into a self-righteous, self-complaisant, and self-conceited spirit; they will ever despise others. Not considering that they are in themselves sinners, law-condemned, miserable sinners; in all they are, and in all they do, they come short of the glory of God, and the perfection of his holy law; and must be wholly and solely indebted to Christ for his perfect righteousness, to clothe, adorn, and justify them. But self-complacency blinds their eyes to this. They swell into haughty airs of their own goodness and importance, hold other poor sinners in supercilious contempt, and treat them with proud disdain, saying, "Come not near me." Stand off. Keep your distance. "I am holier than you." But what saith the Lord of such? "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire which burneth all day." Isai. lxxv. 5. Hateful and offensive. The Lord in mercy humble our proud hearts, rebuke and break our self-righteous, self-complacent, and self-conceited spirits, and bring them into humility before him. O, that we may not be left under the power of what this Pharisee was,

(3d.) His IGNORANCE. Consider this. (1st.) Ignorant of himself. Therefore he says, "I am not like other men." No! poor whited wall, and painted sepulchre! Pitiably proud, superlatively ignorant, and deceived sinner! Thou, and every man (even a regenerate man not excepted) has a nature, black as hell, and deformed as any sinner out of hell; yea, as any

sinner in hell. But thy heart is superlatively deceitful, and through ignorance deceives thee, or thou wouldest be quite out of all conceit with thyself of thy doings, and be thoroughly ashamed for thyself, before a heart-searching GOD. But thou dost not see thyself as thou art seen, nor know thyself as known of GOD. Poor, blind Pharisee. All is dark within.

(2d.) Pharisees are ignorant of the purity and spirituality of the righteous law of GOD, which requires perfection of heart, thought, word and work, and condemns us as sinners, for the least deviation from it. A clear sight of this will make the stoutest heart, and the most self-righteous Pharisee tremble before GOD. But such, like Paul, are alive in self-righteous hopes, and self-conceited confidences, "without the law." Rom. vii. 9. But when the commandment comes to their consciences, sin revives and they die, to their legal dependencies, and with Paul cry out, "O wretched man that I am!" or, with the publican, "GOD be merciful to me a sinner!" This, though a very distressing and painful view, is most humbling and salutary for the soul. The Lord the Spirit keep it up in our hearts.

(3d.) Ignorance of the Gospel, of the love and grace of GOD to sinners, the righteousness which Christ wrought out for sinners, the blood which he shed to atone for sin, and the salvation he has finished for sinners: and of the comforts of the Holy Ghost, which he bestows on sinners, through faith in this righteousness, atonement, and salvation of the Son of GOD. For the Gospel reveals mercy to the miserable, free favour to the hopeless, an atonement for the guilty, justification for the ungodly, pardon for the hell-deserving, salvation for the lost, the hope of eternal life to condemned and desperate sinners, who never did, nor ever can, do any thing to merit the favour of GOD, to reverse the sentence of the curse of his law, and entitle them to his favour and kingdom. But pride, self-righteousness, and ignorance close the eyes of Pharisees to all this, and shut up their heart against receiving it; therefore GOD gets no glory, our Saviour no honour and praise from them. Hence,

Secondly. Our Lord compares their spirit and temper to leaven, and calls it hypocrisy. A hypocrite is one who, like a stage-player, feigns himself to be, what in reality he is not. He acts the part of a king, but he has neither crown, kingdom, nor title to either. Just so the Pharisee struts on the stage of life, acts the part of a righteous person, trusts in himself that he is so, yea, he thanks GOD that he is so, and despises other sinners who are not so. Now all this is dissimulation and hypocrisy. For, there is not a man upon the earth, who is righteous in himself. He who trusts in himself that he is, is both

a Pharisee and a hypocrite. He is guilty of the most daring impiety, and arrogant pride, to assume into the presence of God, and thank God that he is not as other men, a *sinner*. For the Lord himself has declared, "There is none righteous, no not one, in himself." Rom. iii. 10. For God makes no man righteous in himself. It is the very essence of Pharisaism and hypocrisy to think so. But Christ of God is made righteousness to sinners. 1 Cor. 30. Sinners are made "the righteousness of God, *in Christ*." 2 Cor. v. 21. That he who glorieth, should glory, not in himself, but in the Lord Christ, in whom he is righteous, and in him *only*, and not in himself. Here then the odious hypocrisy, and daring dissimulation of Pharisees are manifest, in proudly opposing God's method of making sinners righteous, by their works, instead of faith in his beloved Son. This is flying in the face of God, and doing despite to his Spirit of truth.

(2d.) Our Lord compares this to leaven, which is of a sour, fermenting, communicative, assimilating nature. The self-righteous sinner, is sour, rigid, and austere towards those whom he looks on as wicked and ungodly. "I am not like this *Pharisee*, this unholy fellow, this Antinomian wretch, who has got no righteousness of his own to trust in, glory of, and plead before God as I have. Well may he cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Lord, why me! While I am a stranger to such language, and come to the Lord as a righteous person, with Lord, why not me?" Thus this leaven ferments, puffs up, and swells a sinful worm of the earth, into a high and haughty conceit of himself, of his own righteousness and importance, not only before men, but God also.

This leaven of pride is also communicative and assimilating. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Gal. v. 9. It changes a whole lump of dough, into its own nature and quality. It spread through the Galatian church. Paul's whole epistle to that church, is wrote to expose its pernicious nature, and to expel its poisonous consequences. Hence he most pathetically laments over his brethren, for being under its self-righteous influence, telling them, "They had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness." Wherein does that consist? "In Christ being the end (consummation, or fulfiller) of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth." Rom. x. 2, &c. By rejecting this truth, the Jews lost both their kingdom and religion. Yet, how does this cursed leaven spread through this kingdom! How does it taint and infect professors of the Gospel! How many live under its power, die of its disease, and

perish in self-righteous pride, through ignorance and unbelief! For in one word, it is a practical rejection of the one righteousness of the Son of God, wrought out for sinners, and imputed to sinners through faith, to set up, establish, and trust in our own righteousness, to justify us before God. Amazing absurdity! A sinner's righteousness! Yet how many pulpits ring with the sound, how many presses echo it forth, to the deceiving of sinners, rejoicing of Satan, and creating a loud laugh in hell! Well, therefore,

Thirdly. Might our dear Saviour caution us against it, with, "BEWARE YE." It proceeds from his love to us, and care for us, because he would have us walk simple in faith, joyful in hope, and in sweet fellowship and love with himself, who is, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jerem. xxiii. 6. That we may ever glory in him, saying, "Surely, in the Lord I have righteousness." Isai. xlv. 24. And that "the work of HIS righteousness might be peace, and the effect of HIS righteousness quietness and assurance to our souls for ever." Isai. xxxii. 17. That so, from a righteous faith and hope, "we might be filled with the *fruits* of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." Phil. i. 11. Therefore,

(1st.) O believer in Christ, beware of this leaven of the Pharisees. For it lies at the foundation of every heresy, and is the source of every delusion. Therefore, leave all the glory of this to self-righteous Pharisees. But do you look well to, and watch constantly over your hearts, so as diligently to keep them from this leaven. Have you escaped the corruption, which is in the world through lust? Do you hate sin, strive against sin, and love holiness? Beware of self-righteous pride, lest you make an idol of this. Remember, this is not your righteousness before God, but the effects of the belief of the truth of Christ's righteousness being imputed to you, and of the Spirit being bestowed upon you. For could you carry this to the height of perfection, this could not constitute you righteous, and justify you before God. For, "in many things we all offend." James iii. 2. In all we do "we come short." Rom. iii. 23. After we have done our best, "we are unprofitable servants," Luke xvii. 10; and in ourselves, "miserable sinners." Rev. iii. 19. If we do any thing, in which we think there is no sin, verily there is sin in that thought. And "if we say we *have* no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John i. 8. We are lying as well as unrighteous sinners. Therefore, live low, lie low, and think low of yourself; ever crying from the ground of your heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And ever rejoice in Christ Jesus, "and have no confidence in the flesh, in yourself." Phil. iii. 3.

(2d.) Beware, lest any thing of your own works and doings,

gets in between your heart and our precious Saviour. For, if it does, it will certainly cloud your views of his glorious Person, his perfect atonement, everlasting righteousness, finished salvation, and all-prevailing intercession. Then you will be legal in your frame, cold in your heart, lean in your soul, and uncomfortable in your prospect of death, judgment, and eternity. Therefore, undertake nothing, do nothing, merely to satisfy conscience, to get a good opinion of yourself, and to establish a self-righteous character before God. But undertake, and do every thing, in the name of Christ, your righteous law-fulfiller, advocate, and intercessor, to the glory of God, the honour of Christ, to evidence, that you are righteous, justified and accepted in him, that you may enjoy the comfort of a good conscience, by his resurrection from the dead, and to testify that you are risen with him, "by the faith of the operation of God." Col. ii. 12. Therefore,

(3d.) Be constantly and continually looking unto Jesus, and turning from those who deny the imputation of his righteousness, to make sinners righteous before God. Pity them with all their corrupt notions, and exalt Christ and his truths, above and beyond them. The sight of his great love, will make you joyful in him, while you will be ashamed of your love before him.—His perfect righteousness will put you out of conceit with your own imperfect obedience.—His depth of deepest humility will confound you for your pride.—His sorrows, sufferings, and death for your sins, will cause you to hate them, mourn over them, abhor yourself for them, and lay you in the dust, on account of them.—His finished salvation will put you out of all hopes of doing any thing to save yourself, and cause you to triumph wholly, and rejoice solely in him.—His intercession for you, though it excites prayer in you to him, will lift you above any dependence on your own prayers, be they ever so warm and fervent.—His power to keep you from perishing, to sanctify you wholly, and give eternal life to you freely, will cause you to trust in his omnipotent arm, and not in an arm of flesh; to live as an empty creature, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and looking to receive all out of Christ's fulness.

Thus go on, "leaning upon Christ, the beloved of your soul," as a weak creature, and a helpless sinner; saying every step, "Lord support, or I fall. Lord save, or I perish." Thus look unto, and live upon Christ, lying at the feet of his cross on earth, till he gives you the crown of righteousness in heaven, and admits you to his presence, to sing the praises of redeeming love, justifying righteousness, and finished salvation to all eternity. Amen and Amen.

A COLLECT.

O God, the Father of heaven, who sent thy beloved Son to finish transgression, make an end of sin; and bring in an everlasting righteousness for us ungodly, and unrighteous sinners; bring, O bring our proud hearts humbly to submit to it, and in faith joyfully to receive it, that we may ever live under its sanctifying influence; that we may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of Thee: with whom, and the Holy Ghost, may we love and serve on earth, and eternally enjoy in heaven, through Christ our only righteous Advocate. Amen.

The Thirty-eighth Lord's Day.

ON THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS.

—*Be not faithless, but believing.* John xx. 27.

REVIEW attentively the conduct of Christ's apostles: At their base behaviour to him, and his tender compassion, and long-suffering towards them, you must be struck with amazement, so as to be ready to say, "What wretches were they!" And of him, "What manner of man is this!" Strange! that Christ should choose such a set of beings to be his apostles! For, *Judas* betrays Christ, and hangs himself, "that he might go to his own place." Acts i. 25. This was awful. *Peter* denies Christ most daringly, and curses and swears horribly, that he knew not the man. And behold, *all* of them cowardly forsook, and shamefully fled from him. And after Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell, lo! *Thomas* exalts the strongest unbelief, against the clearest testimony from the other disciples, of Christ's resurrection; and positively declares, "I will not believe."

Were these the men chosen to be the first preachers of the gospel, to conquer the prejudices of sinners, and to establish christianity in the earth? Why not choose righteous, holy, perfect men, who had no sin in them? There were none such in the earth: nor are there now. Christ's will is wisdom. His heart is love to sinners. His grace is manifested by them. His strength is made perfect in their weakness; and his glory advanced by their infirmities. Therefore, in spite of all the powers of earth, and malice of hell, he effected this work, by weak instruments, to the praise of the glory of his own grace. This is marvellous. When we consider them, it reminds us of that eminent type of Christ, David, and the company which resorted to him at Adullam. "Every one who was in distress, and every one who was in debt, and every one who was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them," 1 Sam. xxii. 2. A true picture, a striking type, of those who are gathered to Christ, the captain of our salvation. For they are all remarkably distinguished by these three particulars, (1st.) We are in distress. Christ is the sinner's last shift. If we could do without him, we should never go to him. Meer distress and absolute necessity, causes us to list under him. (2d.) We are in debt. When the spirit convinces, and the law arrests us for our sins; dreading the jail of hell, we flee to Jesus to be surety for us. For, (3d.)

We are discontented both with our state, ourselves, and with all our works and doings. We gladly resort to Christ, and desire to be found in him, having on his righteousness, who is our Adul-lam, or ornament. Blessed be our Lord; like David, he receives ALL who come. He rejects none. Let their cases be ever so wretched, their state ever so deplorable and desperate; yet he graciously receives them, lovingly embraces them, and becomes a Captain over them, to subdue all that is in them, which opposes him, and every enemy which is against them. O, how does our loving Lord bear with our sinful nature! What pains doth he take with our unbelieving hearts! For though we know his love, and believe his power, yet we are poor sinners, and an evil heart of unbelief is ever working in us, to cause us to depart from our Lord.

And indeed, if he were not to keep us continually by his grace, we should depart from him. Let us look at Thomas, and we shall see the picture of ourselves: a striking likeness of our own character, and the amazing love of Christ. O, may the Lord direct our hearts into the love of Christ, and so enable us to meditate on his love, that our hearts may be happy in him!

First. We find the poor, scattered sheep of Christ assembled together, on the first day of the week, at evening, with the doors shut, for fear of the Jews. Lo, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them—What! Did he upbraid them for their shamefully deserting, and cowardly fleeing from him, in the hour of his sorrows, sufferings, and death? Did he say? “Go, ye base, perfidious wretches to your deserved doom. Never shall ye see my face in my kingdom.” Was not this what they had all reason to expect? Certainly. But as he died for their sins, and made peace by the blood of his cross, lo! he comes and pronounces it upon them, “Peace be unto you.” He shewed them the scars of love, his pierced hands and side. He made their poor hearts glad; repeats his peace to them; and breathes the Holy Ghost into them, John xx. 19, &c. O, that I should write, and you read of this great, this unparalleled love of Christ, with such cold, unfeeling hearts! Are not you, with me, grieved for this? Lord, pardon us. Lord warm our hearts with love. But where is Thomas? “He was not with them when Jesus came.” This is recorded to his discredit and disadvantage. For, he lost this precious opportunity: this blessed feast for his eyes, ears, and heart. He saw not the love-prints in Christ’s hands and side. He heard not the blessing of peace, twice pronounced from Christ’s loving lips. His heart was not made glad with the view of his risen Lord: nor was the Holy Ghost breathed into him. Where was he? How was he engaged? Why not assembled

with his brethren? It was to his shame and his loss. Spiritual sloth is the companion of unbelief: activity is the associate of faith. It is very natural to suppose, that he had so far indulged doubts, and given way to unbelief, that he had in a great measure cast off all thought about Christ, what was become of him, whether he was risen or not; and therefore his mind was busily engaged about other things. And it seems pretty plain, that his doubts and unbelief, so far prevailed over him, as to cause fear to get the better of him. For the disciples who assembled, kept the doors shut for fear of the Jews. But Thomas's fears did not suffer him to meet with them. O, by all this, he was bringing on dreadful work in his conscience!

Behold the conduct of Thomas. Look at yourselves. You who are without fault, cast the first stone at him. You who see your faults, level all your resentment against yourselves. Have not you often forsook the assembly of the saints? Has not your mind been attending to, and engaging in worldly business, and earthly concerns, upon the first day of the week, the Lord's Day? Have you not absented yourself from worshipping of, and waiting upon your risen Saviour; and lost many a precious sight of him, and many a comfort from him? Yea, by your over-anxious cares, and too solicitous concerns for the meat which perisheth, the gold which vanisheth, and the riches which make themselves wings and flee away, during your six days, so that on the seventh, you have had no heart for God, no affections set upon Christ, and the things which are above? Hence, hath not your heart been cold, your faith dead, your affections wandering, your hope languid; so that all feeling concern about Christ and his salvation, seems to have almost forsaken you? Hence have not fears beset you, and terrors haunted you, lest, if you should assemble with Christ's disciples, you should suffer loss in your character, name, business, and credit in the world? Trace the source of all this, and you will find these streams all flow from their fountain head, unbelief. Verily, you have the same nature as Thomas had: the same unbelief works in you as did in him: you also are, as his name signifies, a *twin* brother of him. But who can deliver us from all this? No one, but the same Jesus as did him. He is able to save, and willing to save; Yea, blessed be his ever-loving name, he will save his people from all their sins. He neither saves them for their faith, nor will he cast them off for their unbelief; because he loves them, and hath undertaken their cause; therefore he prays for them that their faith fail not. Hence "they are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto eternal salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. Look not then at your strong faith, to glory in it, nor to

your weak faith, to be dejected for it. "But let him who glorieth, glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. i. 31. "Yea, saith the Lord, let him glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD who exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Jer. ix. 24. These, you and I want every moment. O, let us confess to the Lord what we are, poor sinners; and glorify him for what he is to us, THE SAVICUR OF SINNERS! And to keep up this view, let us not lose sight of Thomas, nor of our Lord's loving conduct to him.

Some time after this appearing of Jesus to his disciples, in the same week, they met with Thomas, and with hearts full of joy, and transport in their countenance, their tongues most gladly tell him, "We have seen the Lord:" as though they had said, "O, Thomas! where was you last Lord's day? Why was you not with us? You lost a most precious season. While we were assembled together, with the doors shut, behold our Lord came in a most wonderful manner, and stood in the midst of us, and—" "Methinks I see poor Thomas knit the brow of disapprobation, pour contempt upon their pleasing tale, and abruptly stop their relating it, saying, "Except I shall see in his hands, the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hands into his side, I will not believe." Ver. 25.

Now here observe (1st.) These highly-favoured souls were so full of triumph and joy on seeing their Lord, being blessed with the peace of him, and receiving the comfort of the Holy Ghost from him, that they were glad to communicate of their experienced blessedness, to their brother disciple, Thomas. This is right and well-pleasing to our Lord, that we should publish his fame, and tell others how graciously he hath dealt with us, and what he hath done for our souls. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak." But prepare for the event; for observe

(2d.) The behaviour of Thomas to them. He seems to be in a surly humour, and a bad frame; therefore, instead of rejoicing with them in their joy, lo, he treats their relation with an air of contempt, and, as it were, pours cold water upon the fire of their transport. And as though he looked on them as a set of poor, credulous things, who were deceived by their fancies, and deluded by a phantom, declares he will have stronger evidence than sight, even feeling the substance of Christ's body, before he would believe that Christ was risen, or that they had seen him. Thus, as Mr. Burkit observes, "Thomas carries his faith at his fingers' ends." O, how must this damp their joy, and deject their hearts! Did you never experience somewhat of this? I have. When waiting upon our Lord,

and he has manifested himself in the word of his grace, and filled one with joy and peace in believing; O, how gladly have we told the first disciple we met with, of our experienced blessedness. But alas! he had no care for our tale, nor no heart to congratulate us, and rejoice with us, but waived the subject with an air of unconcern. I have really found this very dejecting and distressing. O, it is ever blessed to cease from man, and to keep our eye ever steadily fixed upon our Lord. Disciples should beware of wounding each others spirit.

Now observe our Lord's love to poor, incredulous, unbelieving Thomas. "After eight days, again the disciples were within, and Thomas was with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." Ver. 26. O, Christ! how dost thou repeat thy visits! how confirm the faith of thy disciples! how freely bestow thy blessing of peace! O, to be ever found where thou dost feed thy flock, and bless their souls with a sense of thy peace. "Then saith Christ to Thomas—What! go thou poor, stupid, unbelieving wretch, who absented from thy brethren the last Lord's day, and thereby lost the comfort of my visit, and when they told thee, that they had seen me, with daring unbelief declared thou wouldst have better evidence than their testimony, and thy own sight; go, perish for thy obstinacy, and die in thy unreasonable unbelief." Was it so? No. Not one word of this. But with all the meekness and tenderness of the God of love, who gives liberally, and upbraideth not, behold Jesus said, "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing. Ver. 27. Here is a loving reproof, and a precious command. Lord, was ever long-suffering love, kind condescension, and tender compassion like thine!

What effect had this on Thomas? "He answered and said, My Lord and my God." Ver. 28. Thus he called Jesus Lord, by the Holy Ghost. This is the confession of faith: the faith of God's elect. The faith of the operation of God. The faith by which Christ is honoured, God glorified, sinners justified and saved; and their hearts comforted. That faith which does not confess, that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father, is not worth one straw. For it will leave the soul dead in sin, under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. I said before, Christ does not save us *for* our faith, but because he loves. Yea, he loved us, before we believed on him, even when we are dead in trespasses and sins, and enemies to him. Therefore he quickened us, gave us power to come unto him, and believe on him. And when, through our fault and folly, our faith fails in its lively actings, exercises, and influences upon our minds, he pities us. "He remembers

that we are but dust;" he revives our deadness, increases our faith, and gives us fresh joy and peace in him. O, what a precious, loving Lord do we serve! Faith is a covenant-grace. All the children of the covenant are blessed with it. Jesus, the surety of the covenant, "is the author and finisher of our faith." Heb. xii. 2. Therefore we are ever to look to him as such: being fully assured, "That we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." 1 Pet. i. 9. O that we may never stagger at any of the promises, through unbelief; but may be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Thus did a precious soldier of Christ act. When he was just going into the field of battle, he looked up and said, "Lord, I am going to be deeply engaged. If through hurry I should forget thee. I pray thee, Lord, do not forget me!" O how wise and happy thus to act in, and under all our earthly engagements! For,

The unbelief of Thomas, obtained the strongest confirmation of the truth of our Lord's resurrection, and a most precious blessing to stand on record for us. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, (therefore thou art blessed. Yet this was a severe reproof for his unbelief, and unreasonable request) blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Ver. 29. This is a most joyful word to our souls. Do we believe in an unseen, risen Saviour? Can we say of him? "Whom having not seen we love." 1 Pet. i. 8. Then we are blessed in time, and shall be blessed to all eternity. For God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in in him from eternity, to grace and glory." Eph. i. 3; &c. Hence attend to the following obvious

REMARKS.

(1st.) That all Christ's beloved, converted disciples, have the evil of unbelief in them. This is a sin which easily besets them. It brings a train of evils upon them, and exposes them to everlasting misery. Therefore, if we belong to Christ,

(2d.) It is our indispensable duty, daily to humble ourselves for it, watch and pray against it, and use all means to resist and overcome it; that our faith may be strengthened, our hearts happy, and our souls lively in the service of Christ, and to the glory of God. For, all blessings are enjoyed in faith. Hence,

(3d.) Being blessed of God in Christ, with all spiritual blessings, we are not left in our natural state, dead in sin, and under the power of unbelief. For this we have constant reason to bless, praise, and rejoice in, an electing God, a redeeming Saviour, and a quickening Spirit, who testifies of God the Father's everlasting love, and God the Son's everlasting

salvation, in the Word of truth, and to our hearts, and thereby gives us everlasting consolation. Therefore,

(4th.) We shall never perish in our sins, under the power of unbelief: for Christ hath redeemed us from all our sins by his blood, made us righteous, and justified us in his righteousness; and, therefore, he will cure our unbelief, and perfect that which is "lacking in our faith." 1 Thess. iii. 10. "Through the supply of the spirit of Jesus." Phil. i. 19. According to the fulness of that grand, covenant declaration, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." iv. 19. Therefore, we ought ever to be, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Heb. xii. 2.

Lastly. Christ speaks this loving reproof, and precious command to us. "Be not faithless, but believing." The former is the cause of all distress, and every evil. The latter, the mean of every comfort, and every blessing. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and is increased by God, through the mean of his Word. And it is the glory and joy of faith, to behold Christ in the Word, and revealed by the Word, as the ever-living and ever-loving, ever-faithful Saviour of Sinners. Therefore, indulging faithless doubts, and suspicions of this in our minds, at any time, or on any account, is inwardly giving place to the devil, as much as by any outwardly gross sin. For it makes the God of truth a liar. Therefore detest it from your very soul. Resist every thing that leads to it, and is promotive of it. Believing, is to accompany us every hour of our life. Even believing the record, which God gave us of his Son. Though we are in ourselves lost, dead, miserable, hopeless, desperate, sinners; yet "This is the record, that God hath given to us, eternal life: and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, (as the object of his faith, hope, and desire of his soul,) hath life." 1 John v. 12. He is to go on believing this record of God, holding it fast in his conscience, living upon the son of God, waiting upon him on his Sabbaths, and walking in all his holy ordinances, in spite of all sin within him, and earth and hell which are against him, until Christ manifests himself in Spirit, as he did to Thomas in flesh, so as to cause him to cry out, in all the fulness of assurance, "MY LORD and MY GOD." Yea, he is to go on believing, till he awakes up after the perfect image of Christ, and is fully satisfied with his presence in glory. O, for more sighing of heart after this!

A COLLECT.

O LORD, thou Prophet of thy Church, teach us to profit by every misconduct of thy people, and every instance of thy

love, recorded in thy word. O convince us more and more of the evil of unbelief, and the necessity of believing every truth concerning thee, written in the Scriptures; so that our hearts may cleave to thee, our affections be set on thee, and our spirits abide in thee. O, Saviour, leave us not to the folly of our own spirits. But in the firm belief of thy Word, and in the happy sense of thy love, may we be taught by thy Spirit, each to call thee, *my Lord*, and *my God*. In this faith may we live. By the obedience of this faith may we glorify thee, and in the comforts of this faith may we die, and eternally reign with thee, to whom with the Father and the Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

The Thirty-ninth Lord's Day.

ON SELF-DENIAL.

Jesus said unto them ALL, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me.
 Luke ix. 23.

“THE Word of GOD, (Christ the essential Word, in all his sayings, from the first of Genesis to the last of the Revelations,) is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, (the regenerate and unregenerate part, flesh and spirit,) and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in HIS sight, with whom we have to do,” (as our Saviour and High Priest, who is now before the throne for us, and will hereafter come to judge us.) Heb. iv. 12, &c.

This is a most solemn consideration! How then stand matters between Christ and our souls? We all profess to believe in him. Are we the real followers of him? Do we see so many charms in him, and such grace and glory shining from him, as to engage our affections to him, so that, through his strengthening us, we can give up all, for the enjoyment of him? This is the conduct of all his real disciples. Is it ours? Let us not deceive our own souls. This we are prone to do. This is easy to do. But it is utterly impossible to deceive the Son of GOD, who is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Suppose He were this hour to require our souls, and commission his messenger, Death, to summon us into his presence; are we so living upon him, and so following him, as to rejoice at the prospect of appearing before him; being scripturally and comfortably persuaded we shall be found in him? This is living like disciples of Christ. Then let Death come, and execute his commission upon us: Christ will receive us to himself. We shall sing his victory in death, and triumph over Death, being more than conquerors, through him who hath loved us. And where Christ is, there shall we be also. Is not this enough to make each of us cry out? “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like unto his.” So you most assuredly shall, if you live the life of the righteous. What is that? “A life of faith upon the Son of GOD.” Gal. ii. 20. May Christ, who is the life of his people, give us to experience this; and to evidence that we are disciples and followers of the LAMB of GOD, by our obedience

to his doctrine in the text. O, may the Lord make our meditation on it sweet and profitable, while we consider, what is implied in coming after Christ—in denying ourselves—taking up our cross, and the reasonableness and necessity of all this.

First. What is implied in coming after Christ? Spiritual life from him—sight of him—faith on him—delight in him—love to him—that we are unsatisfied without him, and cannot live, unless we enjoy him. Or in other words, it is the going out of the soul after Christ, seeing him altogether lovely in his person, offices, relations, work and salvation, as revealed in the Gospel, suited to our lost and ruined state as sinners, and that we must perish without him. Therefore, to come after Christ, is to commence a disciple of him, and to live under his teaching, who says, “Come unto me—learn of me—ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Matt. xi. 28, 29. This every man may be if he *WILL*. The fault is in their own will, if any are not disciples of Christ. For he says to *all*, “If any man *will*, let him come, &c. To will is from ourselves. To will well is from the Lord. Hence, says that great luminary of the Church of England, Bishop Beveridge, “I am sure, to say none shall be saved but those who *will* of themselves, would be sad news for me, whose *will* is so backward to every thing that is good.”—Blessed be God, it is he “who worketh in us, both to *will* and to do of his good pleasure.” Phil. ii. 13. Therefore, would we see a lively instance of what is implied in coming after Christ? Look at Paul. Hear him tell his experience, “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Phil. iii. 12, 14. Here is no folding of hands to sleep. No slumber and sloth indulged. No resting in carnal frames, and past experiences. No being satisfied with Bethel visits, fourteen, ten, or seven years ago, as some professors talk; but following on, pressing forwards, wanting more of Christ, catching faster hold of him, to enjoy more sweet fellowship with him. This, this is coming after Christ, not only breathing in life, but enjoying the liveliness, ardour, zeal, and activity of spiritual life. Paul, as a Christian, saw the necessity of this. He could not be happy without this. We all have the same reason for this as he had. The Lord stir us all up, to the same zeal, liveliness, and activity, in following him! for, without this, we cannot enjoy comfortable evidence, and blessed assurance, that we are coming after Christ, and are followers of him. But if we are, we shall find cause enough for what we are to consider.

Second. What is implied in a man's denying himself? O

when our heart is set upon any thing, what self-denial will we use for the obtaining it! But what is meant by this pronoun, **HIMSELF**? Even all that a man is, as a creature fallen from **GOD**, destitute of the image of **GOD**, and possessing nothing but the lusts of a beast, and the pride of the devil. The light of truth makes this manifest. And the voice of truth proclaims. Deny these. What! deny our happiness, and forego our enjoyments? Flesh and blood cannot bear this. True. This is contrary to flesh and blood. Therefore, flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. They keep men from the enjoyment of the king of glory, in their hearts on earth, and if conformed to, lived after, and died in, will prevent them from entering into the kingdom of glory. For, "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live." Rom. viii. 13. Therefore, they must be denied that we may live.

How live? With a notion of the doctrines of grace in our heads, making a profession of being Christ's people, submitting to his ordinances, becoming a member of an orthodox church, then sit down quite easy, and conclude all is well? Thus far flesh and blood may go, without any of the spirit and life of the Gospel, or the least self-denial. To the great dishonour of Christ, and the reproach of his blessed cause, how do such carnal professors swarm among us? As to the power of real faith in their hearts, living a life of faith upon the Son of God, enjoying love to him, peace from him, delight in him, fellowship with him, coming after him, and denying themselves for him, they are utter strangers to all this. Though as to the doctrine of this, they hear and assent to, while they have no experience of these blessings in their hearts. Their lives manifest it. Their affections are earthly, their conversation carnal, their delights sensual. For, they can join the openly profane and ungodly, in the jocund song, frantic mirth, tavern enjoyments, card-table diversions, and the play-house entertainments; and yet vainly think themselves disciples and followers of Christ. Why so? Because there is the pride of the devil, at the bottom of all this walking after, and pleasing the flesh. A self-righteous opinion, keeps up a vain confidence of themselves, and their state. For they can tell you, that perhaps ten, or fifteen, more or less, years ago, they had some sweet experience passed upon their hearts; their soul was favoured with a precious Bethel visit, as they call it; therefore conclude that, at that time, they were converted and born again, commenced new creatures, and became believers in Christ. Hence they get into churches, become a dead weight upon them, sleep on, and take their rest. Thus they have a name to live, but—are dead. They have every thing of the form of godliness about them.

One thing only is wanting, to make them true disciples, and real followers of Christ, that is the power—the life of a christian—the life of GOD in the soul, which ever manifests itself by obedience to this word of Christ, “Let him deny himself.”

Now can it, upon the broadest bottom of charity be said, that such are disciples and followers of Christ, who, instead of denying themselves, are pleasing the flesh, pampering its affections and lusts, and gratifying their self-righteous pride? No. For with just as much truth they may be said to be walking bare-foot to Jerusalem. I remember once lamenting the conduct of such professors, a good lady said of one of them, “I wish he would not come among us. I am sorry he ever made a profession: he is such a reproach to the cause of Christ.” It is said of a certain godly man, that he was sore tempted of Satan. Living much in duty, and in the exercise of godliness, Satan suggested to him, “Why takest thou all this pains to watch, fast, pray, and abstain from the sins of the times? What dost thou O man, more than I?” The Christian replied, “I pray, I serve the Lord; yea, I deny myself to follow him.” “Nay then, says Satan, thou goest beyond me, for I am proud. I exalt myself,” and left him.

But do many professors build all their hopes on former experience of what passed on their souls some given time back? Though we should by no means decry Christian experience, and the manifestation of Christ to his peoples hearts; yet we must by all means insist on self-denial for Christ. Therefore, where this is wanting, alas! what will the other prove? only that persons are deluded and deceive their own souls. For, if we really have seen the glory of Christ in the Gospel, and known him by faith in our hearts in time past, pray has he lost any of his charms since? Do we not stand in the same need of his grace and salvation now, as we did then? Is not fellowship with him, comfort from him, and joy in him, equally as necessary at present as in days that are past? Are not our immortal souls as precious, and Heaven and glory as desirable, now as then? Why, O why, then is Christ and these things less estimable in our eyes, less desired by our hearts, and less pursued by our spirits? the fault is in ourselves. We have not given up all, and do not deny ourselves for Christ, because self-righteousness blinds our eyes to the charms of him, and corrupt lusts draw away our hearts from him. Thus our souls are deceived into false confidence without him. Lord pity, Lord shew mercy, and undeceive those who are going on thus. O! keep our souls near to thee, living upon thee, and enable us ever to deny ourselves for THEE, who sayest,

“Let him deny himself.” Both his righteous, and his sinful self, so as not to put any trust in the former; or to seek

happiness, in gratifying the lusts of the latter. The Divine Teacher, the Comforter, has settled this point in the consciences of believers, that they are freely accepted, and fully justified in Christ, without their contributing the least mite towards either. But, as to their following Christ, enjoying the sense of peace in him, and fellowship with him, all things must be denied, and every thing given up, which stand in competition with him. For he so glorifies Christ in their sight, and so takes of the things of Christ, and presents them to their hearts, as to engage their affections to him. Hence with Paul, they "count all things but loss, dross, and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, that they may know him, win him, and be found in him." Phil. iii. 8, 9. Hence gladly we deny ourselves for the enjoyment of him. Cheerfully we give up, and cast away our confidence in the filthy rags of our own righteousness, seeing the infinite perfection, and everlasting glory of that righteousness, which Christ hath wrought out for us, and GOD imputes to us. Living under the view of the cross, and the love of him, who bore its curse, and suffered its shame, we feel our souls so captivated by this love, that we most heartily give a divorce to our lusts, and say, Get ye hence. Though dear as a right hand, or right eye, or however painful to the flesh to part with them, yet it is the joy of our new-born spirits to deny them, for the love of precious Christ, the glory of his dear name, and the enjoyment of the blessings of his kingdom; which are "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17. This is the faith. This must be the self-denying life of Christ's disciples. True, we find self-righteous pride cleaving to us, and corrupt lusts raging in us; but we are the determined followers of the LAMB, and therefore deny them. This is to be our constant work.

For Christ says "Let him take up his cross *daily*, and follow me." What is our cross? Verily, all and every thing in life which is pleasing to our corrupt nature, but is contrary to the love of Christ to us, and his death on the cross for us. By Christ's cross we live. In the power of this faith, we are daily to take up our cross and follow Christ, never loosing sight of him and his cross, that we may bear our cross patiently and comfortably: this is profitable to our new-born souls. As sure as we are disciples of a crucified Lord, we shall have a cross to take up *daily*. But the comfort of all is, under the dead weight of the heaviest cross, we have a living, loving Saviour, to look unto, to animate and strengthen us. And this is our joyful consideration, every step we take on earth, we get nearer our crown in heaven. For, as we follow Christ, we know we are travelling to heaven, because we obey his word. Seeing all Salvation, justification, pardon, peace, the life of our souls on

earth, and the hope of eternal life in heaven? all flowing from, and all secured to us, by the cross of Christ; we give up all for him, forego all to follow him, and to enjoy all in him.

This is the view of faith, with Christ in our eye, and glory in hope. This is the walk of faith, with the love of Christ in our hearts, his salvation in our souls, and his glory our aim. Hence as living members of him, daily pensioners on him, and continually receiving grace from him, we experience, "His commandments are not grievous." 1 John v. 3. Where Christ is precious, his commands cannot be grievous. O! to believe the self-denial of Christ for us, and our soul's salvation, will make self-denial for him, not only not grievous, but very delightful. Then only we live and walk like his blessed disciples, when Christ rules within, and we are subject to him; when we have an understanding to know him, faith to depend on him, a will to choose him, affections to embrace him, a heart to meditate on him, fear to offend him, love to honour him, a tongue to exalt him, a life devoted to him; and after all, a deep sense, that we are unprofitable servants of him, and ashamed of ourselves before him, because we are the subjects of a nature, which is contrary to him. So that in the time of life, and the hour of death, we may glory in him, and cry "God be merciful to me a sinner." Thus, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." 2 Cor. vi. 7. O! this precious walking IN CHRIST, will ever be productive of humility of heart, and self-denied obedience of life: while a joyful, thankful spirit, will accompany us every step.

A COLLECT.

O, LAMB of GOD! make, and keep us followers of thee. Grant us to possess all in thee, and to give up all for the enjoyment of thee. O! that we may experience thee to be the life of our souls, the peace of our consciences, the love of our hearts, and the death of our sins. Lord dwell in our hearts by faith, that by faith we may walk in thee, and be devoted to thee. O! save us from our self-righteous pride, and from our sinful lusts. These are contrary to the honour of thee. Enable us to deny them, that we may follow thee, now and ever, to the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen.

The Fortieth Lord's Day.

ON SPIRITUAL JOY.

Yet will I rejoice in the LORD. I will joy in the God of my Salvation. Habak. iii. 18.

THIS chapter is entitled ; A prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet, upon Shigionoth : or with a Song. Miserable as we are in ourselves, yet we should never pray to God, under a sight of our miseries, and a sense of our wants, without joy in the Lord for what he is to us. That is the prayer of faith. No less than three times in this chapter, the prophet useth the word *Selah*, which means to quicken the attention, and call forth the consideration, to what is spoken. Spread the matter before your minds : ponder it in your hearts : dwell deep upon it in your thoughts ; even till you see a glory in it. For glorious things are here set before us. Even the going forth of Jehovah, with his anointed, (the MAN Jesus, the son of his love) for the salvation of his people, and the discovering the foundation unto the neck ; that is the foundation, depths, and dreadful heights of that sin, misery, and wretchedness, we are all fallen under ; and his marvellous grace and salvation, in raising and restoring us. “*Selah*,” says he. Consider this most attentively. Ver. 13.

Here is a very little word in the text, called a preposition. Great stress is to be laid upon it ; for it is of the utmost importance to us, and the cause of all joy in us. This little word is *IN* : it is twice used. Therefore, I would address you with, *Selah*. Consider it deeply and attentively. *IN the LORD. IN GOD. O !* may the God of our salvation, enable us to catch some of that heavenly joy contained in this text, while we are considering,

(1st.) The nature and ground of this joy.

(2d.) The subjects of it.

(3d.) The season for it.

First. The nature and ground of this joy. It is the joy of faith. Now as faith is the gift of God ; so this joy cometh from God. Yea, it is of the very same nature which the Lord himself is represented in Scripture to partake of. “The Lord rejoices over us to do us good.” Deut. xxviii. 63. Yea, “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty : he will save, he will *rejoice* over thee with *joy* : he will rest in his love, he will *joy* over thee with singing.” Zeph. iii. 17. O, how encouraging, how animating, how enlivening, is every sentence here ! what a pleonasm, what a redundancy of words and sentences are

here used, all to express (and as though words could not fully express) the great joy the Lord has in his people, the ecstasy of his rejoicing over them, and the melody of joy which his heart feels for them! And when the eye of faith reads this, the judgment of faith conceives of it, and the heart by faith receives it; then we catch the flame of this heavenly joy, from the word of **GOD**; yea, from the heart of **GOD**; for we know his loving heart, by his word of truth and grace. And hence, as the Lord rejoiceth over us, so we rejoice **IN** the **LORD**, and joy **IN** the **GOD** of our salvation. This is "the joy of faith." Phil. i. 25. "That joy which is the fruit of the spirit." Gal. v. 22. "The kingdom of **GOD** is joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 7. "**GOD** fills us with all joy in believing." xv. 13. Thus we see somewhat of the nature of this joy, it comes from Heaven, and is possessed in faith. We rejoice **IN** the **LORD**, and joy **IN** **GOD**, believing, that He has joy in us, and rejoices over us. O how sweet, to take up our joy in **GOD**, from the Word of **GOD**! This is not an enthusiastic joy.

This is joyful. But says a poor, bowed down, distressed sinner, "It is very happy for you, who are on the mount of this joy, but God be merciful to me, I am such a miserable sinner, so tempted, tried, and afflicted, so harassed with doubts and fears, that I live in the valley of *Achor*: trouble is my companion, and distress my food: I see no cause for joy in me." I wonder if you should. Verily, you are like Jacob's sons when there was no corn in Egypt. Jacob said, "Why do ye look one upon another?" Gen. xlii. 1. Will looking one upon another relieve your distress, and afford you the joy of food? This is just your case. You see no cause for joy in yourself, and yet you are, from day to day, looking for it, in hope to find yourself better, that you may get a spark of joy in, and from yourself. Now, so sure as the Lord loves you, he will disappoint you. Nay, he does it daily. He suffers a famine of joy in you, on purpose that you should not look at yourself for it; but go out of yourself, and seek it **IN** the God of salvation. I observed there was great glory in the preposition **IN**, twice used in this text. I begged you would keep your eye on them, and your attention fixed to them. But you lose sight of them: look at, and turn to yourself.

Mind the ground of the prophet's joy. I **WILL** rejoice in—What? that I am a prophet of the Lord, highly honoured by him, and a great man among his people? No. But rejoice **IN** the Lord: **IN** Jehovah: **IN** all his persons: **IN** his everlasting covenant of love, grace, and salvation, ordered in all things, and sure; in his purposes, promises, and providences: **IN** all He is, and has declared He will be, to his people in time, and through all eternity. I **WILL** rejoice. It is the fixed purpose

happiness, in gratifying the lusts of the latter. The Divine Teacher, the Comforter, has settled this point in the consciences of believers, that they are freely accepted, and fully justified in Christ, without their contributing the least mite towards either. But, as to their following Christ, enjoying the sense of peace in him, and fellowship with him, all things must be denied, and every thing given up, which stand in competition with him. For he so glorifies Christ in their sight, and so takes of the things of Christ, and presents them to their hearts, as to engage their affections to him. Hence with Paul, they "count all things but loss, dross, and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, that they may know him, win him, and be found in him." Phil. iii. 8, 9. Hence gladly we deny ourselves for the enjoyment of him. Cheerfully we give up, and cast away our confidence in the filthy rags of our own righteousness, seeing the infinite perfection, and everlasting glory of that righteousness, which Christ hath wrought out for us, and God imputes to us. Living under the view of the cross, and the love of him, who bore its curse, and suffered its shame, we feel our souls so captivated by this love, that we most heartily give a divorce to our lusts, and say, Get ye hence. Though dear as a right hand, or right eye, or however painful to the flesh to part with them, yet it is the joy of our new-born spirits to deny them, for the love of precious Christ, the glory of his dear name, and the enjoyment of the blessings of his kingdom; which are "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17. This is the faith. This must be the self-denying life of Christ's disciples. True, we find self-righteous pride cleaving to us, and corrupt lusts raging in us; but we are the determined followers of the LAMB, and therefore deny them. This is to be our constant work.

For Christ says "Let him take up his cross *daily*, and follow me." What is our cross? Verily, all and every thing in life which is pleasing to our corrupt nature, but is contrary to the love of Christ to us, and his death on the cross for us. By Christ's cross we live. In the power of this faith, we are daily to take up our cross and follow Christ, never loosing sight of him and his cross, that we may bear our cross patiently and comfortably: this is profitable to our new-born souls. As sure as we are disciples of a crucified Lord, we shall have a cross to take up *daily*. But the comfort of all is, under the dead weight of the heaviest cross, we have a living, loving Saviour, to look unto, to animate and strengthen us. And this is our joyful consideration, every step we take on earth, we get nearer our crown in heaven. For, as we follow Christ, we know we are travelling to heaven, because we obey his word. Seeing all Salvation, justification, pardon, peace, the life of our souls on

earth, and the hope of eternal life in heaven? all flowing from, and all secured to us, by the cross of Christ; we give up all for him, forego all to follow him, and to enjoy all in him.

This is the view of faith, with Christ in our eye, and glory in hope. This is the walk of faith, with the love of Christ in our hearts, his salvation in our souls, and his glory our aim. Hence as living members of him, daily pensioners on him, and continually receiving grace from him, we experience, "His commandments are not grievous." 1 John v. 3. Where Christ is precious, his commands cannot be grievous. O! to believe the self-denial of Christ for us, and our soul's salvation, will make self-denial for him, not only not grievous, but very delightful. Then only we live and walk like his blessed disciples, when Christ rules within, and we are subject to him; when we have an understanding to know him, faith to depend on him, a will to choose him, affections to embrace him, a heart to meditate on him, fear to offend him, love to honour him, a tongue to exalt him, a life devoted to him; and after all, a deep sense, that we are unprofitable servants of him, and ashamed of ourselves before him, because we are the subjects of a nature, which is contrary to him. So that in the time of life, and the hour of death, we may glory in him, and cry "God be merciful to me a sinner." Thus, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." 2 Cor. vi. 7. O! this precious walking IN CHRIST, will ever be productive of humility of heart, and self-denied obedience of life: while a joyful, thankful spirit, will accompany us every step.

A COLLECT.

O, LAMB of God! make, and keep us followers of thee. Grant us to possess all in thee, and to give up all for the enjoyment of thee. O! that we may experience thee to be the life of our souls, the peace of our consciences, the love of our hearts, and the death of our sins. Lord dwell in our hearts by faith, that by faith we may walk in thee, and be devoted to thee. O! save us from our self-righteous pride, and from our sinful lusts. These are contrary to the honour of thee. Enable us to deny them, that we may follow thee, now and ever, to the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen.

The Fortieth Lord's Day.

ON SPIRITUAL JOY.

Yet will I rejoice in the LORD. I will joy in the God of my Salvation. Habak. iii. 18.

THIS chapter is entitled; A prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet, upon Shigionoth: or with a Song. Miserable as we are in ourselves, yet we should never pray to God, under a sight of our miseries, and a sense of our wants, without joy in the Lord for what he is to us. That is the prayer of faith. No less than three times in this chapter, the prophet useth the word *Selah*, which means to quicken the attention, and call forth the consideration, to what is spoken. Spread the matter before your minds: ponder it in your hearts: dwell deep upon it in your thoughts; even till you see a glory in it. For glorious things are here set before us. Even the going forth of Jehovah, with his anointed, (the MAN Jesus, the son of his love) for the salvation of his people, and the discovering the foundation unto the neck; that is the foundation, depths, and dreadful heights of that sin, misery, and wretchedness, we are all fallen under; and his marvellous grace and salvation, in raising and restoring us. "Selah," says he. Consider this most attentively. Ver. 13.

Here is a very little word in the text, called a preposition. Great stress is to be laid upon it; for it is of the utmost importance to us, and the cause of all joy in us. This little word is IN: it is twice used. Therefore, I would address you with, *Selah*. Consider it deeply and attentively. IN the Lord. IN God. O! may the God of our salvation, enable us to catch some of that heavenly joy contained in this text, while we are considering,

(1st.) The nature and ground of this joy.

(2d.) The subjects of it.

(3d.) The season for it.

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of my heart : The determined resolution of my will, to rejoice in Him alone, and in no other. See the lofty ambition of faith. Well is she styled the queen of graces ; for she scorns to fix on any object below the KING OF KINGS, the King of glory. I will joy in—What? my faithfulness to grace received? the merit of my works, since I knew God? my own inherent righteousness before God? or in the claim I have to the favour of God, as not being like other men, a poor sinner, but a holy perfect man in the sight of God? Was this the ground of the prophet's joy? No. This is the joy of pharisees. Not one word of this do we find here, nor meet with in scripture, unless it be to expose the pride, and condemn the folly of it.

Habakkuk was not under the influence of this Pharisaic spirit. He was taught otherwise. He knew himself better. He was sensible that he was a poor sinner. Like the humble publican, all his hope was in the Lord, all his joy from the Lord, and all his rejoicing was, that mercy for sinners was with the Lord. Therefore he says, "I WILL joy in the God of my salvation." Hab. iii. 18. God Jesus, and no other. Not all the power of sin within me, nor men and devils, earth and hell, around me, shall prevent my joy in that God, who has wrought out salvation for me, and is salvation in me. This will be the joy of believers. Paul gives us this description of the joy of circumcised hearts, "We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 3. But, methinks I see a knit upon the brow of a self-righteous countenance, and with the smiling air of pharisaic contempt, saying, "So then, this joy in God, is the joy of sinners!" Blessed be God it is, or else there could be no rejoicing in the Lord, no joy in the God of our salvation on earth, till we get to heaven : for there are none but sinners here. This is our

Second point. The subjects of this joy and rejoicing. They are such sinners, on whom God has pronounced, "Let there be light." And like the children of Israel, when thick darkness overspread the land, they have "light in their dwellings." Exod. x. 23. In this supernatural light from heaven, they see themselves, what they are, sinners in a body of sin and death : where they are, in a world of vanity and woe : whither they are hasting with speedy flight, to death and immortality. And in this light they read the Scriptures, and understand the loving kindness of the Lord, and see that God is become their salvation. Like Philip to Nathaniel, so they in an ecstasy of joy, say to their fellow sinners, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, JESUS of Nazareth." John i. 45. Hence their rejoicing in the Lord, and their joy in the God of their salvation commences. They find every cause for joy, in Him. The more they look to Him,

and live upon Him; the more they joy and rejoice in Him; and the more they find their souls dead to their old carnal mirth, and natural joy, on account of what they are in themselves. For they see nothing but continual cause for sorrow, and sighing in themselves.

So the prophet Habakkuk, in this chapter, cries out, "O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid"—"in wrath remember mercy." Ver. 2. When the speech of God in his holy law is heard, it brings terror and fear upon sinners. Therefore says he, "When I heard, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." Ver. 16. He found the plague-sore of sin within him; this caused him to become hopeless and wretched. His belly trembled. His lips quivered. His mouth was stopped. His strength departed. Guilt caused rottenness in his bones. Yet, says he, "I shall find rest in trouble." Where? Verily, in the God of his salvation; who says "Come unto me all ye who labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28. The prophet Habakkuk, as a sinner, believed. He came. He found rest in Jesus, the God of his salvation, and hence, says he, "I will rejoice, and joy in him."

"The God of my salvation." Who but sinners want a Saviour? who but sinners stand in need of salvation? who but sensible sinners will look to, and believe in Jesus, the God of salvation? who but such, can joy and rejoice in him? And of all such he says, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the well of salvation." Isai. xii. 3. Hence hear the church, "the seed which the Lord hath blest," a company of poor sinners, whom he hath called, all unitedly declaring, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness: as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." Isai. lxi. 10. Now all this flows from God's everlasting covenant with them, ver. 8; and is in consequence of a marriage-union between them and precious Jesus, the head and surety of that blessed covenant. "Therefore, "as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Isai. lxii. 5. So that our joy in the God of our salvation is, because he is married to our nature; took it to himself, as a man taketh his wife; and he became one flesh with us. Yea, and by faith we take Christ, with the full consent of our wills, and the hearty approbation of our affections, as our bridegroom. Hence our joy is the joy of a bride, who possesses all in her husband: for we have all the riches of the

love of his GOD-head to glory of, all the obedience of his manhood to confide in ; and all that HE is, and has done, as GOD-man and Mediator for our salvation to joy of, and to rejoice in ; so that though we are poor, and have nothing in ourselves, yet we possess all things IN Him. Therefore we joyfully sing,

Poor, helpless worms, in Thee possess,
Wisdom, and strength, and righteousness.

We are fully assured of this, by the testimony of the Spirit of truth, in the Gospel of grace. And by faith we experience the joy, that "IN THE LORD, Jehovah Jesus, we have righteousness and strength." We are righteous, justified and accepted IN HIM." Isai. xlv. 24, 25. Therefore, though we do sorrow, and mourn for our sins, yet our sorrow is turned into joy, that a man, Jesus the MAN is born into the world, who has taken away our sins, clothed us with his righteousness, and saved our souls with an everlasting salvation. This "his joy remains in us that our joy might be full." John xv. 11. "And the joy of the Lord is our strength." Nehem. viii. 10. The more we joy in the Lord, the more our souls are strengthened by the Lord. But,

Thirdly. When is the proper season for this joy? Now, ever, at all times, and under all circumstances; whether the day of prosperity, or the night of adversity. For the LORD changeth not. He is ever the same to us, at one time as another. His love is the same. He ever rests in his love. He is, "Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour, the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Heb. xiii. 8. His word, his promises, his oath are the same. Therefore, "consolation, strong consolation IN Him, awaits all who have fled for refuge to Him. Heb. vi. 18. And this is the positive command of his Spirit, "Rejoice IN the Lord *always*, and again I say rejoice." Phil. iv. 4. This command, because of our slowness of heart to obey it, is twice repeated. It is as much our duty to rejoice IN the Lord, as it is to keep holy the Sabbath-day. It is enjoined by the very same authority, and GOD is equally glorified by our obedience to it. Yes, ye poor dejected, because legal hearts, hear the Gospel-law of Deuteronomy, "Ye shall rejoice in all ye put your hands unto." xii. 7. Ye cannot keep the Lord's Sabbaths acceptable to Him, without spiritual joy IN Him. Ye cannot glorify Him on his holy days, without considering what He is to you, and joying of Him, and rejoicing IN Him, as the GOD of our salvation. O! how sweet and pleasant thus to obey the voice of the Lord, always, at all times, and in all circumstances, who saith, "Thou shalt rejoice IN the Lord, and shalt glory IN the holy one of Israel." Isai. xli.

10. Admit you find a thousand reasons, and ten thousand objections against spiritual joy in the Lord; because of your sin and sinfulness; yet he has given us one word which will surmount them all. O! methinks you eagerly ask, Where is it? and passionately declare, Could I find it, I would rejoice in it. Would you? Then read the reign of grace, and the proclamation of grace. In this one word you have all cause for joy. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through the righteousness of Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Rom. v. 20, 21. If this cannot cause you to rejoice in the Lord, nothing will.

It was the view of this which made that poor sinner, but happy and joyful prophet, Habakkuk, say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls." What then? Here is every soul want, and spiritual distress imaginable, painted and figured by these images taken from nature. Under a view of all this, what says the prophet? I will indulge gloom and melancholy, and sit down in dejection and despondency? No. But he would honour the LORD, and glorify his GOD, who is unchangeably the same. For He saith, "I am the LORD, I change not." Mal. iii. 6. Therefore he resolves, "Notwithstanding all appearances in nature are against me, yet the LORD, MY GOD is over all, above all, and greater than all," therefore, "Yet will I joy and rejoice in him." O! thou poor, dejected, down-cast sinner, consider this. Remember, "this Man Jesus hath an unchangeable priesthood. He ever lives to pray. He is almighty to save ALL who come unto GOD by him." Heb. vii. 24, &c. O, then, let Him have the joy of thy heart, and the glory of thy soul!

Andronicus the old emperor of Constantinople, finding all things go cross with him, consulted the word of GOD, and opened his Psalter, at Psalm lxxviii. 14. "When the almighty scattered kings, they shall be white as snow in Salmon." This was a striking instance of consolation to him. For, as Salmon was a dark, shady mount, by reason of many very high trees, the snow rendered it lightsome, and therefore signifies, light in darkness, joy in affliction, mercy in the midst of judgment. As when the Lord said to the woman, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth." Sorrow was to be her affliction—She was to bring forth—That was to be her joy. Therefore, search more diligently GOD's word, that you may rejoice more constantly in Him.

A COLLECT.

O! God of our salvation, grant us the joy of thy Spirit. Though we are nothing but sin, and have all cause for sorrow in ourselves, yet make us ever to rejoice in Christ Jesus, who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to the glory of God. Amen.

The Forty-first Lord's Day.

ON PRAYER.

Jesus said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven. Luke xi. 2.

THOUGH the Holy Spirit is called the third Person in the sacred Trinity, yet he is the first who begins a blessed work of grace upon our hearts. He convinces us of sin, teaches us that we are sinners, makes us sensible of our misery and danger, and thereby excites prayer in our hearts, to the God of our salvation. Shew me a real disciple of Christ, who can live without praying, and I will shew you a man who can live without breathing. Christ is a praying Lord. All his servants are praying disciples. They partake of his Spirit. This Spirit leads them to him. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Rom. viii. 9. But how may any one know that he has the Spirit of Christ? By believing Christ's words, going as a lost sinner to him, living as a miserable sinner upon him, and praying as a poor sinner unto him. This is as strong a proof, that such a soul belongs to Christ, as if a voice from heaven was to proclaim it. For the Spirit sent from heaven hath effected this. But such disciples of Christ, finding themselves to be wretched sinners, cannot help reflecting, what the God of heaven and glory thinks of them, how his heart stands affected towards them, in what manner they must address him, and how they must pray unto him, so as to be accepted of him. Thus it was with Christ's disciples in the days of his flesh. They came to him. They desired him to teach them how to pray, as John taught his disciples. And Jesus said unto them, "When ye pray, say, OUR FATHER," &c. O, may the LORD the Spirit, enable us to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this blessed Scripture; that we may embrace, and ever hold fast the belief and comfort of it in our hearts; that we may be the loving disciples of Christ, and the obedient children of our heavenly Father, to our lives end. Lord grant it. But how, and by what means, do any of the fallen race of sinners become children of God? What is the disposition of the hearts of all such! Let us meditate on these two points,

First. How, and by what means, do any sinners become children of God? We are not naturally so. But are expressly said to be, "Children of wrath, even as others." Ephes. ii. 3. Consequently, we could do nothing to procure this highly distinguished favour, or to entitle ourselves to this inestimable blessing. Could God see any thing amiable in the whole

race of sinners, that could render any of them worthy in his sight, or deserving to be made his children? That sinner who says so, does not know himself. He has not the spirit, faith, or love of a child of God. But he is of his father the devil. The truth is not in him. He speaketh a lie, from the pride of his heart. Both pride and lying are contrary to God's children, but are of their father, "who abode not in the truth." John viii. 44. Father is a special, peculiar, covenant name, which the First Person in the holy Trinity took upon himself as expressive of the love of his heart, and of what He would be to, and do for, ALL whom "he chose in Christ, before the foundation of the world." Eph. i. 4. So that God does not stand in the near and dear relation of a FATHER, to the whole race of mankind, nor have all, and every one of the human race, the least shadow of reason, or Scripture, to call God, Our Father. For if so, why need Christ have taught his disciples, what is common to every man, and what every man knows, if God is the universal parent of all mankind? The contrary of this is most evident. For every one begets a child after his own likeness. So does God. But every man has not the likeness of God, nor the heart of his children; therefore, God is not their Father. But God is the Father of sinners, by adoption and regeneration. Without these, no one can in truth call God, Father. But all who are the subjects of these are God's children, and can in the Spirit of faith and truth call God, OUR FATHER. Let us briefly consider these, (1st.) What is adoption? putting one into a state of sonship, who is not so by nature. Thus Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses to be her son, who was not naturally so. This is an act of free love, sovereign choice, and distinguishing favour. If you were disposed to adopt a child, to treat him as your own, and to make him heir to your fortune, doubtless you would think you had a sovereign right to chuse for yourself, and confer your favour upon whom you please. Dare not then to restrict the most high God, even where worms of the earth claim prerogative. But God's thoughts are secret to us. We know not who are his adopted sons and daughters, till

(2d.) He regenerates them. Hear one of those dignified ones telling us the nature of this. "Of his own will begat He us, by the Word of truth." James i. 18. Just in the very same manner, as a mother brings her child into the world, so doth God bring forth his children. So the original properly imports. Thus we see the cause, why any are God's children. Even his own will and pleasure. We had not the least will, nor power in this work. Here is the mean: the Word of truth. But how may any one know that he is thus begotten of God's will? Very plainly. By his knowledge of the Scriptures, faith in

them, and love to the truths of them. Do you thus know, believe, and love the Word of God? Verily you are a child of God. You may be as sure of this, as that you are a rational being, by your knowledge, understanding, and converse about rational subjects. And as a farther evidence of this, you will receive, go to, and believe on Jesus, who is emphatically, "THE TRUTH." John xiv. 6. "He is the head of the body the Church, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Col. i. 18. Hath Jesus the pre-eminence in your heart in the work of salvation? Then you are begotten of God's will, by the Word of truth.

For God did nothing without Christ in the material world. He doth all things by Him in the spiritual. Therefore he says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." 1 John v. 1. Jesus is his anointed Saviour. God is his heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit is his Sanctifier and Comforter. This is as plain, and as clear, from the Word of truth, as that we had parents who gave us a being in this world. Let not Satan reason you out of the comfort of this, nor rob God of the glory of effecting this. Thus God having from eternity predestinated us, "to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Eph. i. 5. Therefore in the fulness of time he regenerates, and begets us to himself, by the Word of truth, that we should be, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in his beloved Son." ver. 6. Hence, "we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii. 26. Now we have the hearts, and speak the language of God's children. For with united voice we all declare, "We were born, not of blood, (by natural descent, as of godly parents) nor of the will of the flesh, (for that will was to be servants of sin, and children of the devil, to our lives end) "nor of the will of man," (no parent, however dearly beloved by him, no friend, to whom we were dear as his own soul, no minister, however earnestly he wished our salvation, could effect this) "but of God," John i. 13. Wholly, solely, and entirely we were born of the will of God, to be his children, and to call Him OUR FATHER.

I know by experience, that it is very natural for our carnal reason to object to this, and for our natural pride to rise with indignation against this. For here is nothing for the vanity of the creature to feed upon: nothing to fan the embers of his ambition; and to sacrifice to his own will and power. But all is of the sovereign will and good pleasure of God, and to his glory alone. But, if God is our Father, we shall act as his children, by stifling our corrupt reasonings, resisting our self-righteous pride, rejecting the workings of unbelief, and cry out,

in self-abasing wonder, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! 1 John iii. 1. Behold it, O ye angels, and all ye heavenly host above! behold it, O ye our fellow sinners, and fellow saints on earth! behold it, O our souls, with wonder, love and praise, that we, who were by nature children of wrath, servants of sin, slaves of the devil, and heirs of hell; should be the adopted, regenerated sons of God! Lord! who am I? What am I? Why me? What have I done, that thou shouldst put me among thy children, and that I should call thee Abba, Father: our Father: my Father in heaven! O, this love, this discriminating love amazes the souls of his children, sinks them into humility, and excites love and praise to God! For, "not only hath God adopted, and regenerated them, but also, Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Gal. iv. 1. O the joy, blessedness, and glory of this! Let us dwell on it, be delighted with it, and give glory to OUR FATHER for this. And let us consider

Secondly. The disposition of the hearts of God's children. While transcribing the last text, I saw something very striking and peculiar in these words, "The Spirit of his Son." He is sent into the hearts of God's children. This clearly manifests itself by the disposition of their hearts towards Christ. Hence they go to him, believe on him, trust in him, glory of him, and desire ever to be found in him. For they see their constant need of him, and that without him they must be eternally lost, and entirely miserable. They have not a blessing but what comes from Christ. They can find no peace, no rest, no comfort, no righteousness, no holiness, no heaven, but in Christ. Therefore Christ, in his person as God-man, in all his offices for them; in all his relations to them, and in all his work upon earth, for the salvation of them, is peculiarly precious to them. Hence Peter sums up all the evidences of God's believing children in this one word, "To you who believe, Christ is precious." 1 Pet. ii. 7. If a person could tell of every good disposition in his heart towards God, and give ten thousand evidences to prove himself a child of God, unless he could say, from heart-felt experience, Christ is precious to me, they are all not worth one straw. He might as well produce a sheet of blank paper to prove himself a child of God. Perhaps this may seem very harsh. But God's word is our rule of judgment. Hear that. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha, fall under the most dreadful curse." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Whether any man can love Christ, without his being precious to him as a Saviour, judge ye.

But this one evidence, that Christ the Saviour is precious to me a sinner, is the very turning point in the disposition of the heart of a child of God; and the contrary is evident. For when poor sinners can speak against Christ, and say, do not let us hear so much of the divinity, righteousness, atonement, and salvation of Christ; for hereby you rob us of our will and power, and God of his glory, they discover that they have not the spirit of a child of God. And their jealousy for God's glory, is only for the *unknown* God: not the God revealed in the Bible: not the God of the apostles and christians: not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; our God, and our Father in Him; but an idol of the brain, an image which they have formed in their own evil imaginations; and which suits to keep up the pride of their own will, and the ambition of their own power. But, OUR FATHER, who is in heaven, delights in the glory of his Son: we please Him best, when we glorify Christ most. For he calls on us, "Behold my servant, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." Isaiah xlii. 1. And again, He says of him, "I have exalted one chosen out of the people," Psalm lxxxix. 19. And, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. iii. 17. And, "When he bringeth his first-begotten into the world (in our nature) He saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6. Thus we hear and believe our Father's voice from heaven concerning his Son. And we know that we are the children of God, because we have the hearts of his children, to love, esteem, delight in, and glorify his only begotten, his well-beloved Son.

God, the Father, gave him to be our Saviour, we receive him as such: to be our righteousness, we glory in him as such: to be our atonement, we are satisfied with him: to be our high priest, we rejoice in him: to consecrate a way, through the vail of his flesh, to draw nigh to God; we are delighted with it, and wish for none other: to be our righteous advocate before God, we look to no other: to be holiness in us, and sanctification to us, we trust in Him for this: to be our eternal redemption, O! we long for that day, when we shall perfectly see Him as He is, and perfectly worship and glorify Him as we ought, and as our souls now wish, and strive to do. O! this disposition of heart towards the Son of God, includes, and is productive of a numerous train of marks and evidences, that God is OUR FATHER. We prove this daily. We experience this continually. And therefore, we go to Jesus constantly, as poor sinners. Glory to him, He loves us freely, receives us graciously, and saves us powerfully. For we want his salvation every day, and every hour. And we hear his loving voice, and believe his inviting word, "Come unto me, ALL ye who labour, and are heavy laden." And we partake of his gracious promise, "I will give

you rest. Take my yoke upon you," (it is lined with your heavenly Father's everlasting love, and my saving grace) "and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly," (to receive you as poor creatures, and save you as miserable sinners, and to teach you of your heavenly Father's everlasting love to you, and of my salvation of you) "and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Math. xi. 28, &c.

This is the life of God's children. A life of faith upon his beloved Son. And this life manifests that they have the Spirit of his Son in their hearts, by coming to Christ, to learn of Him. Thus did his disciples in the days of his flesh. So do all his disciples now, in the days of his Spirit, come with, "Lord teach us to pray." What did Christ say to them? He teaches them the love of the Father. He bids them go to Him, and call Him, **OUR FATHER**. O! this is most blessed, precious, joyful, and heavenly teaching! For thus we experience the truths of our dear Lord's words. "All things are delivered unto me, (as man and mediator) of my Father. No man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Matt. xi. 27. Here's a glorious revelation of God the Father to us poor sinners, by his Son, even a **MAN** like unto ourselves! This begets love to God, delight in Him, devotion to Him, as from loving children to an affectionate Father. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." John i. 18. Even as, "**OUR FATHER**, who is in heaven," and says our Lord, "No man cometh to (any knowledge of, love to, or delight in) the Father, but by me." No! Why not? Because every man is a sinner, fallen out of God: dead to God: an enemy against God: does not know God; and therefore cannot, will not come to God. But, "**I am the way**," (the only way to God for sinners) "and the truth," (by whom the nature and character of the true God is displayed, in all his glorious perfections, as justifying the ungodly, sanctifying the unholy, and saving sinners, in and by me, according to the truth of all the types and predictions of his covenant love, and precious promises) "and the life," (of sinners dead souls: of all their graces; of all ordinances, promises, and providences.) John xiv. 6. Now this is the Spirit of the Word of truth. The Spirit of God's Son, which is sent into the heart of all God's children. The Spirit of their faith. In and by this Spirit, they come to God and call Him, "**OUR FATHER**, who art in heaven." And by this Spirit they are enabled to obey Christ's command, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matt. v. 16.

INFERENCE.

(1st.) How contrary is all this to our natural notions of **GOD**, and the pompous ignorance which the great, the wise, the learned of this world display, when they treat of the nature and perfections of **GOD**? "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools." Rom. i. 22. Such fools, as to reject the light of revelation, and form to themselves a **GOD**, in the darkness of their natural understandings, and in the evil imagination of their corrupt hearts. This image they set up, and call him, **Our Father**, and say he is the universal Father of all mankind. And those who do not confess, and bow down to him as such; but own and acknowledge the **GOD** of the Scriptures, the **GOD** of the apostles, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him, our Father. All who deem the spirit of the Scriptures, enthusiasm, call all who know the **GOD** of them, and believe in Him, as revealed by them, enthusiasts. What! to know **GOD** by his word, to believe in Him, as his word reveals Him, to rejoice in Him as **OUR FATHER**, as taught us by the Spirit of his word,

Enthusiastic this!

Then all are weak, but rank enthusiasts.

In the knowledge and love of our Father, we pity their ignorance, we are unaffected with their hard names, while we enjoy the comfort of knowing, what our Lord promised, "That I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you," John xiv. 20. O! this blessed knowledge makes us bold for the truth, and fearless of every enemy against the truth.

(2dly.) Here is no fear of devilish pride, no danger of self-righteous presumption, in calling **GOD**, **OUR FATHER**. For, we did nothing to obtain this exalted favour, nor that could entitle us to this heavenly blessing. **GOD**'s adopting us to be his children in Christ, was of his free love, and everlasting choice from all eternity. That He regenerated us, was by the power of his Spirit. That we believe on the name of his only begotten Son, "This faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of **GOD**." Ephes. ii. 8. "That we are kept persevering in this faith unto salvation, is by the power of **GOD**." 1 Pet. i. 5. Therefore, all is to the praise of the glory of the grace of **GOD**. Hence we are always confident in **GOD**, because all is of grace to the glory of **GOD**. And it is our inestimable privilege to know, that we can never lose our heavenly Father's love, nor forfeit our blessed son-ship. For as **GOD** did not choose and adopt us to be his children, on account of any goodness foreseen in us, so neither will He cast us off, from being his children, for any evil which we are the subjects of. For He loved us, chose us, and hath made us accepted in his beloved Son. Our

standing in the love of God, is not in ourselves, but in Christ, with whom God is ever well pleased, and with us, as He views us in him; righteous, and freed from all sin: yea, perfectly righteous in his righteousness, and cleansed from every spot of sin, and thus “presented in him, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.” Ephes. v. 27.

Lastly, not only exult and rejoice in your inestimable privilege, but consider also, your indispensable duty, and walk as obedient children of your heavenly Father. Privileges and duties are to go hand in hand in the life of faith. They are like the pomegranates and bells round the high priest’s garment. While we taste the sweetness of the pomegranate in our exalted privileges, the bells should awaken our love, and remind us of our indispensable duties: so that whatsoever our heavenly Father enjoins, we in faith and love may ever obey. It is our blessed privilege, not to be dragged to duty, under the slavish fear of hell; nor be bribed to duty, by low, legal, and mercenary motives, in order to bring God in as a debtor for our services, and to entitle us to his favour. Leave these to those who know not the love of our heavenly Father, and the grace and salvation of our precious Saviour. O! to live in love, walk in love, and obey in love, this is our privilege, and our heaven upon earth. May this be our practice, till we reign in the heaven of love and glory, in the kingdom of our Father.

A COLLECT.

OUR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, for becoming the Father of us miserable sinners, in Christ thy beloved Son. O! give us the comfort and joy of this in our hearts, through faith, by thy Spirit, that we may love thee, and rejoice in thee, as our Father, and devote ourselves to thee, as thy obedient children. Lord, add joy to our faith, and humility to our joy. O! keep us in life, comfort us in death, and bring us to thy kingdom in glory, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory, now and ever. Amen.

The Forty-second Lord's Day.

ON THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

And my Covenant shall be in your Flesh, for an everlasting Covenant. Genesis xvii. 13.

THUS speaks Jehovah, the sovereign LORD of heaven and earth, to sinful dust and ashes. Let all flesh keep silence before him. Let all his people rejoice in him, as their LORD and their GOD, in everlasting covenant love with them. To impress our minds with a lively sense of his covenant love, and grace to us, not less than twelve times, in this short chapter, does the LORD mention his covenant. How then say some among us, there is no such covenant existing? For the very same reason that others said, "There is no resurrection of the dead." 1 Cor. xv. 12. Even because of their ignorance, and unbelief of the Scriptures. The LORD here declares to the Father of the faithful, and to all his believing seed, both the nature of his covenant, and the sign of it. O! may our covenant LORD the Spirit, help us now to meditate on these, so as to see the glorious grace held forth in them, that our souls may be established in the faith and comfort of them; and GOD have fresh glory from us.

(1st.) The LORD Jehovah, in all his persons, calls it, **MY Covenant**: the same who said, "Let us make man in **OUR** image, after **OUR** likeness." Gen. i. 26. Man had lost both. What did the LORD do? Enter into covenant with man, who was now fallen into the image of Satan; that if he would perform some just terms, and righteous conditions, GOD would again restore him to his image and favour? The very thought is utterly unworthy of the GOD of infinite wisdom, though adopted by the sons of pride and folly. No. But where sin had abounded, grace did much more abound. Though sin reigned unto death, yet grace reigns unto eternal life. Therefore the Lord proclaims his grace, even his covenant grace to sinful man, without the least merit or desert being found in him, or any term fulfilled, or condition performed by him. But here is the covenant declaration to Abraham, and to all his believing seed, "**FEAR NOT, I AM THY SHIELD, AND THY EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD.**" O! well might the Lord call it **MY covenant**. It was planned by the co-equal, and co-eternal **THREE**. And each person in the glorious GOD-head, engaged to sustain their various offices, for the purposes of exalting their own glory, in bestowing grace on man, the sinner upon earth, and crowning him with glory, honour, immortality,

and eternal life in heaven. O, my soul ! O, my fellow sinners ! fall down in lowest prostration, and with highest joy adore, and praise the sacred, covenanting **THREE**, who had such compassion upon us, when foreseeing us in our low, our lost estate. O, if we believed more steadily this covenant love, which is so clearly, and so expressly revealed in the holy Scriptures by the Holy Ghost, the witness and testifier of it ; how much more joyful should we be in our hearts, and obedient in our lives !

(2d.) The **LORD** says, " My covenant shall be in your flesh." You shall carry the mark and sign of it about you ; circumcision. This was a very painful rite, to be imposed upon tender infants. But the faithful received and obeyed it. They did not consult flesh and blood. And is this all that is meant, or intended by it, a mere submission to a positive command of **GOD** ? No. They saw infinitely more in and by it. It was, " The token of the covenant between **GOD** and them," ver. 11 ; " a seal of the righteousness of faith." Rom. iv. 11. Abraham received it as such, and " He rejoiced to see the day of Christ ; he saw it and was glad." John viii. 56. Why ? because he found and felt, that blessedness was come upon him, through Christ's righteousness being imputed to him, the sign and seal of which he ever carried about him. And he clearly saw the day of Christ, as being incarnate, made flesh, and dwelling among us, as a **MAN** like unto ourselves in all things. Yea, and also, that as the token or seal of the covenant was in his flesh, so it prefigured, and lead him to look to Christ in our flesh, as given of the **LORD**. For, " The Covenant of the people," Isaiah xlii. 6, the head, surety, mediator of the everlasting covenant, by whom redemption was to be wrought out for captive sinners, righteousness brought in for the unrighteous, and salvation finished for the lost, by Christ in our flesh. For, circumcision is not an everlasting sign. It is abolished. We have it not in our flesh. But **GOD**'s covenant is everlasting, and He says, " My covenant shall be in your flesh." Where then are we to look to, but Christ in our flesh, and **GOD**'s everlasting covenant in him ? O, how precious is this to the faith of our hearts ! How does this endear our covenant Father, **GOD** ; our covenant Saviour, Jesus ; and our covenant teacher, leader, and sanctifier, the blessed Spirit, to our souls ! How safe, how secure, how happy are we, in the view of this ! The **Lord** teach our poor, dull hearts, to understand this precious gospel mystery more and more !

(3d.) " My covenant, My everlasting covenant shall be in your flesh," saith the **LORD**. The Son of **GOD** was manifest in our flesh. All the stipulated terms and conditions of this everlasting covenant, Christ in our flesh hath fulfilled. Therefore all the blessings of this covenant are sure to us, and shall

be bestowed upon us, out of his fulness ; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Eph. v. 30. "All things are put under his feet, and He is head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him, who filleth all in all." Ephes. i. 22, 23. But there is a great glory in this text which I have omitted, which is this, "GOD GAVE him to do, and to be all this to his Church." The whole God-head concurred in this, according to everlasting purposes, and covenant designs. Hence he is called, "The surety of the covenant." Heb. vii. 22. All the debts, dues, and demands, which we were answerable for, to law and justice, he took upon himself, struck hands with GOD, fully, perfectly, and for ever to satisfy and discharge ; and every supply for our need, and every blessing for our soul and body, for time and eternity, he engaged to procure for, and to bestow upon his body the church. And all this he effected in our flesh.

(4th.) What church ? the church of England, the Romish church, or any independent church ? or any who affect to call themselves **THE CHURCH**, exclusive of all others saying, lo here is Christ ? No. The holy Spirit, who beareth witness to the truth, gives us a full answer to this. "Not any particular nation or people, but all the children of GOD, all the elect, who are scattered abroad, that he should gather them together in one." John xi. 52. These Christ calls, "my sheep," John x. 27. They are all naturally scattered, and wandering from GOD, like sheep that are lost ; Christ takes charge of them, and gathers them to himself, as the great Shepherd, and Bishop of their souls. 1 Pet. ii. 25. When they are gathered into one, and become one in Christ Jesus, believe on him, and are joined to him by the Spirit, then they are made manifest to themselves and others, that they are of GOD's church, of that body of which "Christ is the head," Col. i. 18 ; yea, "the head over all things to them." Ephes. i. 23. Now all these blessed, happy, and glorious effects, proceed from this one cause, that GOD's everlasting covenant is in our flesh. And when made partakers of them, we joyfully confess this, and give glory to the whole God-head, Father, Son, and Spirit, for these covenant blessings.

(5th.) See happy Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesying of our rich mercies, and precious blessings, and ascribing them all to this **HOLY COVENANT**. "Blessed be the Lord GOD of Israel, for he hath visited, and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers."—Whence all this ? Why all this ? Because the **LORD** "**REMEMBERS HIS HOLY COVENANT.**" Luke i. 67, &c. "The Lord will ever be mindful

of his covenant." Psal. ci. 5. So as to bestow every covenant grace and blessing, upon his covenant people in Christ, their head; for his everlasting covenant is in our flesh. There is no grace, mercy, or blessing from God, but what comes to us through the flesh of Christ, and Christ in our flesh. No coming unto God, "but by that new and living way, which Christ hath consecrated through his flesh." Heb. x. 20. This is a joyful consideration. It makes Christ exceeding precious to our hearts, and our hearts very joyful in God our Father in him. And excites thanks to the loving Spirit, for teaching us the knowledge of Christ in our flesh, giving us faith in Him, and causing Him to be lovely in our eyes, and glorious to our hearts. O! what praises are ever due to our covenant God, for revealing this covenant to us, causing us to see it, and say of this everlasting covenant with dying David, "It is ordered in all things and sure. It is all my salvation, and all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "The secret of the LORD is with them who fear Him; and He will shew them his covenant." Ps. xxv. 14.

(6th.) Happy for us, most joyful consideration to us, as this covenant is in our flesh, and is an everlasting covenant, so all the gifts, graces, blessings of it, are everlasting also. For "we are loved with an everlasting love, elected by everlasting choice: have an everlasting Saviour, and are saved with an everlasting salvation: justified and made righteous, by an everlasting righteousness: redeemed with an everlasting redemption: comforted with an everlasting consolation, and the good hope of everlasting life, and have a high priest to pray for us, whose priesthood is unchangeable." Heb. vii. 24. And therefore, faith shall not fail us, hope forsake us, nor full fruition of our covenant God in glory disappoint us, "For we are kept (as garrisoned in God) by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. For, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Col. iii. 4. Thus there are no doubts, ifs, ands, peradventures, nor perhaps, in this everlasting covenant: (though there may be many in the children of it, through unbelief.) For it is ordered in *all things* by the **THREE ONE GOD** of wisdom: and therefore all its blessings are *sure*, from the **THREE ONE GOD** of everlasting love. Yea, to God's wisdom and love, his faithfulness and truth are added, to confirm all. What more could we wish? What more could we ask? Behold! stand amazed with wonder, and rejoice with admiration! For our sakes, so full of everlasting compassion is our covenant God to us, more He adds.—What? His sacred oath. "Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God

to lie, we might have **STRONG CONSOLATION**, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb. vi. 17, 18.

(7th.) Thus all is established in the court of heaven, by the everlasting covenant in our flesh, for us. Now, how stands it in the court of conscience within us? What do we know? What experience have we of the blessings of this everlasting covenant upon us? It is brought to a point. Here are persons specified, and strong consolations for them. Are you of the number of the former? Do you partake of the latter? Surely, it is not difficult to know whether you are easy and satisfied with yourself: with what you are in the flesh; or whether you have seen yourself miserable, and your state ruined and hopeless, and have commenced a refugee, and fled from yourself, from all that you are in the flesh, to Christ in our flesh, to lay hold of him, and to be found in him. If so, the light of the covenant hath shined into you, the blessing of the covenant is upon you, and strong consolation, from the word and oath of an immutable God awaits you. For you are an heir of promise: you have received grace out of Christ's fullness. Go on to receive grace upon grace; till grace on earth is consummated in the glory of heaven. For St. Paul, who was highly favoured by covenant grace, and greatly indulged with clear views of covenant love, says, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Phil. iv. 19. All supplies for us needy sinners, come from a covenant God, by Christ in our flesh.

(8th.) Therefore, as the Lord said unto his servants, "Bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, to his feast." Luke xiv. 21. So ye children of the promises, and of the covenant, bring hither your impoverished nature, your maimed consciences, your halting hearts, and your blinded minds, to partake of this covenant feast, from the hands of Christ in our flesh. Methinks I see our gracious King Jesus in our flesh, like king Ahasuerus, stretching forth his golden sceptre, and lovingly asking, "Now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee. Or what is thy request? and it shall be done unto thee." Esther ix. 12. Yea, he says, "Search the Scriptures (the charter of the covenant) for they testify of me, the head of the covenant." John v. 39. See if there is not in them, ample provision for all your need; and rich supply for all your wants. And all treasured up in Christ, our covenant head, for all his members to receive out of his fullness. For he says, "He that eateth my flesh, even he shall live by me." John vi. 57. As the covenant is in Christ's flesh, and as Christ in our flesh is our life, so our life is sustained by eating Christ's flesh. This is our covenant food. And as abstaining from natural food will bring on disorders, and death to the

body; so abstaining from feeding on Christ's flesh, will bring on disorders and deadness of soul. How is your appetite as to feeding on Christ's flesh in your heart by faith? Is it keen or cloyed?

(9th.) O, says one, "I see such poverty and emptiness, wretchedness and misery, blindness and nakedness, that I can scarcely lift up my head, or keep up my hope." Poor soul. Thou art ready to faint for want of food. You must feed or die. Christ's flesh is set before you. He bids you eat, and live for ever, comfortably now, and eternally joyful in heaven. But you ask. How are we to eat Christ's flesh? It is to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, all that the Scriptures testify he hath done in our flesh, and is to us in our nature. O, this is blessed feeding! here is a rich and plentiful feast for your souls, all the year through: yea, for every day in the year; and every hour in the day. When you have exhausted all this, then there is danger of poor sinners perishing with hunger, and without hope, and not before. But thus feeding on Christ's flesh, will keep up hope, and invigorate the life of the soul. Are you poor? Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. Rich in all "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephes. iii. 8. O never, never wish to get rid of the sight of your indigent poverty, and extreme emptiness, lest you be full, and deny the Lord, so as not to feed upon his flesh. Pray the loving Spirit to keep up this sight in you, that your appetite may be keen, that your faith may be in continual exercise on Jesus the **TRUTH**, that your mind may digest, and your soul be nourished and strengthened thereby.

(10th.) As to your wretchedness and misery, it is your mercy to see, and be sensible of. For, it is a double misery to be a wretched sinner, and not see it: a miserable sinner, and not feel it: and to be puffed up with pride under it, like the self-assuming, vain-confident Pharisee. Luke xviii. But it is most blessed, ever to come to the Lord, with a keen appetite to feed upon the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life, and with the publican's heart, feeling his wretched misery, to cry, **GOD** be merciful to me a sinner! For he went away justified, by the merciful friend of sinners. Hear Christ in our flesh pronounce the precious beatitudes of the covenant of grace. See if your character be not in the first, and feed upon it in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 3.

(11th.) As to your complaint of your blindness and nakedness, who told you that you are naked? O, say you, I see it clearly. I have nothing but rags, filthy rags, which will nei-

ther cover my shame, hide my nakedness before God, nor screen me from his wrath. Verily you are the first blind sinner that ever saw this! But says our Lord, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." Matt. xiii. 16. It is blessed indeed, not to have our eyes blinded, by an imaginary notion of what we have not, a righteousness of our own; and to confess with the church of old, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags. Isaiah lxiv. 6. And with Paul to pray, "To be found in Christ, not having on our own righteousness." Phil. iii. 9. Such are blessed by Christ, and blessed in him; for his everlasting righteousness is upon them, and they are everlastingly justified in him from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law, or their obedience to it." Acts xiii. 39. And the Lord in covenant love, says of them, "They shall be mine, when I make up my jewels. Mal. iii. 17. For they are partakers of that precious faith which makes Christ, his righteousness and salvation, glorious in their eyes, and precious to their souls.

Now do not, by indulging unbelief, doubts, and fears, rob the precious God-head, of the glory of this everlasting covenant, nor Christ the head of it of his honour, of obtaining full pardon of all our sins by shedding his precious blood: free and perfect justification, in his righteousness, and everlasting salvation, by his rising again from the dead, and ever living at the right hand of God, to pray for, and save us to the uttermost. Say not with a bloody persecutor of the Romish church, that this doctrine is good to feed on for supper, but not so fit to breakfast on. Or, in other words; It is good to die in, but not to live by. But why? Because some think it discharges the soul from all love to God, and fear of Him. Strange indeed! Fear not with such a fear. But firmly believe God's truths, and trust Him with the consequences. For you will always find, faith will work by heavenly love, and be accompanied with a holy fear. God in the construction of his holy covenant, hath fully provided for this. Therefore, he says, "I will never turn away from them, to do them good:" there is our blessedness and comfort. "And I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall never depart from me:" here is our joy and safety. "This is the Lord's everlasting covenant." Jer. xxxii. 40. Yea, and all our chastisements and afflictions, are included in this covenant of grace, and spring from the love of the Covenanters. "For if his children (the children of Christ) keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail, &c." Psalm lxxxix. 30, &c. Now this is the covenant you have been baptized into, in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Therefore by faith in this covenant, believing the love of the Father, the Grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, you are to live and walk all your days upon earth, till you attain to mansions in the sky, where Jesus our forerunner is entered, and has prepared a place for all his redeemed. To whom be glory for ever. One word of

CAUTION.

Beware of ever looking on your faith, repentance, and obedience, as conditions of the covenant, as though these were to introduce you into God's presence, and entitle you to his favour. This is very low, legal, and quite contrary to the tenor of the covenant of grace; as also to the love of the Father, the salvation of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. They are the blessed graces of the covenant. For, because God the Father loved you, He gave Christ for you, and therefore the Holy Spirit bestows these graces upon you. But not to supplant Christ, but to glorify him. Therefore bless the Spirit for them; but let all your hope, confidence, and rejoicing be in Christ alone. Consider this point deeply. A mistake here will prove distressing to your conscience, and dishonouring to your Lord. Study and pray to have a right understanding in all things. For, this is the peculiar delusion of our day, that faith is our righteousness, repentance the condition of our salvation, and obedience the procuring cause of our final justification. A clearer proof, a stronger evidence cannot be given, that persons who speak thus are ignorant of the Gospel, strangers to **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and unexperienced in the graces of his Spirit. Hence their glorying is not good. For they glory of what they are in themselves, instead of what Christ is to us, and hath done for us. May it be our daily, our last and dying prayer, Lord deliver us from self-confident hope, and self-righteous delusion.

A COLLECT.

LORD give us to see such ample provision made for us needy creatures, and miserable sinners, in the covenant of thy grace, that as daily pensioners, we may come humbly to Jesus, to receive out of his fulness. Lord save us, as from our beastly lusts, so also, from our devilish pride. Be glorified in us, and by us, and may all our glorying be in the **LORD**, Father, Son, and Spirit, now and ever. Amen.

The Forty-third Lord's Day.

ON GOSPEL HOLINESS.

For thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. Ps. cx. 3.

THIS is the **LAW** of the **LORD**. The law of his everlasting love and eternal covenant of grace and salvation. Paul calls it, in New Testament language, **THE LAW** of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. viii. 2. "This law he delighted in after the inward man, vii. 22. And if you have the Spirit of life, or an inward man, you will delight in it also. This law, or the whole doctrine of covenant grace, and gospel salvation, revealed in God's word, from the first of Genesis, to the last of the Revelations, is what we are made alive to God by, are to live to God by, and are everlastingly saved by. "Therefore, this is the law of the **LORD**, which David's blessed man delighteth in, and meditates on day and night." Psalm i. 2. And this "**Law of the LORD**," he says, is "perfect, converting the soul, its testimonies are sure, making wise the simple, and rejoicing the heart." Ps. xix. 7, 8. Do you find it so? All who believe the truths of this blessed law do. May the Lord enlighten, and enable us in his loving fear, with a view to his glory, and our souls' profit to consider,

(1st.) These words.

(2d.) The law of gospel holiness contained in them.

(3d.) The effects of it upon our lives and conversations.

First. Let us dwell a little on the words of the text. Here is David a prophet of the **LORD**, under the immediate teaching, and inspiration of the Spirit. For, "the prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man, but holy men of God, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21. All the prophets under the motion and influence of the Spirit, spake in the name of the **LORD**. They assumed the language of the **LORD**, even as though it was the Lord himself who spake. For, as Christ says to his apostles, "It is not ye who speak, but the Holy Ghost." Mark xiii. 11. This was true of all his prophets. And quoting this very psalm, he says, "David himself said by the Holy Ghost, the **LORD** said unto my Lord, &c." Mark xii. 36. So that David's tongue, or pen, is used instrumentally by the Lord the Spirit, to publish the language of Jehovah's ever-

lasting council and covenant to his people, for the joy of their faith and the glory of their souls.

(2d.) "For thy people"—Who speaks this? Jehovah the Father, to Jehovah the Son; who was in the fulness of time to be flesh, and dwell among us. But why *thy* people? Our Lord tells us, "The Father gave them unto him," John xvii. 6, to be redeemed, justified, and saved by him. Hence he says to the Father, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." xvii. 10. They were the Father's by everlasting love, and covenant choice. They were the Son's from his eternal acceptance of them, to be their covenant head, representative, and advocate; to do for them, all that law and justice required, and to be to them, all that they stand in need of, as wretched creatures, and miserable sinners. Therefore they are Christ's peculiar people.

(3d.) "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." In the day of the gospel. The Gospel of Christ, is the power of God unto salvation, to every one who believeth." Rom. i. 16. But no man can see the glory of the Gospel, nor will believe its precious truths, by his own natural power. For he does not see his need either of Christ as a Saviour, nor of the Gospel of his Salvation. It appears to him as an idle story, and a fictitious fable, that he is no ways interested in, or concerned about. Who can persuade a proud, self-righteous sinner, and such we all are by nature, of its importance, and incline his heart to receive it, in the love of it? No man on earth, nor the highest archangel in heaven. Though provision is made for the people of God, in the covenant of grace, yet none of them know any thing of it, or concern themselves about it, till the grace of the covenant, the power of the Spirit, comes upon them, and makes them the willing disciples of a covenant Saviour. But when the fulness of time is come, and the day of Christ's power is known in them, and felt by them, then they come willingly to him, cordially receive him, heartily believe on him, readily embrace him, and cheerfully follow him, for all the purposes of covenant grace. Is this your case? Do not amuse your head with speculative notions of the doctrine of election, but be deeply concerned to feel in your heart, the grace of electing love, the power of Christ's grace, and the comforting communion of the Holy Ghost, that you may live by, walk in, and follow Christ.

(4th.) "In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." In the experience of this, we shall ascribe to Jesus, what his Father here does, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Thus as Paul says, "The Holy Ghost is a witness to us." Heb. x. 15. He bears witness in the word, to our hearts, of the transactions, councils, purposes, and designs of the

everlasting covenant of grace, peace, holiness, and salvation. Without his revelation of them, we could never either have known, or enjoyed the blessings and comforts of them. So that we are equally indebted for Salvation to the Holy Spirit, for his communion with us, as to the love of the Father for us, and the grace of his Son to us. For, without his revealing, teaching, witnessing, and applying Salvation in us, we could never have enjoyed it: nor have known the love of the Father, nor the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, his beloved Son. O! let us look to Him, to instruct our minds in this covenant love and grace daily, and let us ever fear to grieve, or quench this divine guest, and heavenly comforter in us. O, may He graciously help us!

Secondly, to consider this law of gospel holiness, here mentioned. It is a common case in England, for a person to be obliged to change his name, in order to enjoy an estate. For this an act of parliament, or a law must pass. How is this law made? By the king, lords, and commons. The king cannot make such an act without the lords and commons: nor they without him. The three states must concur. What is the spirit of this law? That such a person shall henceforward be styled and called by such a name, and enjoy such and such privileges, as are therein specified. Now this is very similar to our subject. Here is a law to pass in favour of man, who is to be changed from what he originally is, a sinner, to a holy saint. This law is to pass in covenant, by the sacred **THREE** acting in concurrence. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the power of the Spirit, are engaged in this transaction. The covenant law is passed. What is the spirit of it? That all the elect shall be redeemed by Christ; be made willing to come unto him, be one with him, united to him, be sanctified in him, be partakers of his holiness, and adorned with all "the beauties of holiness," by the power of his Spirit.

(2d.) But does man in nothing concur in all this? Not at all either in making or passing the law, no more than the person just now mentioned, does in making the act of parliament. In this he is passive. True, he is represented in the House of Commons. So is the sinner in the covenant of the House of the **LORD** of all **LORDS**. For Christ the Son of God is his representative. He undertakes in our names, to be, and to do in our nature, all things needful for our enjoyment of every holy and blessed privilege contained in this law; and as the head of influence to us, to communicate out of that infiniteness of holiness which dwells in him, both as the Son of God, and Son of man, to us. Hence by faith in Christ, and union to Christ, by the power of the Spirit, we partake of,

what we have not one grain in our nature, the beauties of holiness. Our souls really have a new birth unto Christ; a new and holy nature in, with, and from Christ; and therefore we are holy before the Lord, and have the internal beauties of holiness from the Lord. Hence we are said to be "sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints." 1 Cor. i. 2. And thus, "Christ of God, is made sanctification to us." Ver. 30.

(3d.) These beauties of holiness are from the womb of the morning: the glorious morning of the eternal council, and everlasting covenant of Jehovah. A womb pregnant with every mercy, big with every blessing, and which brings forth, from time to time, every inestimable privilege, and joyful comfort to the children of men. This womb of the morning, is ever teeming with every blessing to us. From it we obtained the gift of Christ, the gift of faith in Christ, our new birth into him, sensible communion with him by faith, peace of conscience with God, holiness of heart before God, and meetness for the enjoyment of God on earth, and in heaven. Thus as the priests under the levitical law, put on their stately, and holy garments, to appear in before the Lord, and to do the service of the Lord; so we, under the influence of this gospel law, or covenant grace, from the womb of the morning, put on the beauties, or the ornamental dress of holiness. For,

(4th.) "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." I remember when Jesus was praying, "Father, glorify thy name," there came a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The people who heard it, said it thundered: others said an angel spake. But Jesus said, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." John xii. 27, &c. So this blessed speech of God the Father, to God the Son, is for our sakes. The Holy Spirit hath revealed it, and testified of it, for our sakes. "Thou, O Jesu, hast the dew of thy youth." "The morning is the parent of the dew." Job xxxviii. 28. As the pearly drops of dew stand thick, and are innumerable in the morning of the day, so shall the holy converts of Christ be. As the pearly drops of dew refresh and replenish the earth, so shall Christ be to water their souls with the beauties of holiness. He is the womb of the morning dew, and he has all the love and vigour of youth to shed it upon, and refresh them. But we cannot say of these spiritual dews, as we do of natural ones,

The dews of the evening be careful to shun,

They're the tears of the sky for the loss of the sun.

No, blessed be Christ, we experience them to be salutary and enlivening. Hence our holy souls cry to him, as the hungry Jews did for bread. John vi. 34. "Lord, evermore give us this dew of thy youth, these beauties of holiness. For this is

the holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. This is the signet which Jesus, our high-priest, appears in before the LORD, and we in him, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Exod. xxviii. 36. This is THE HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD, which shall be on the bells of the horses, and every utensil before the altar of the Lord." Zech. xiv. 20. Meaning every saint of Christ, sanctified in Christ, and separated from the Devil's asses, who delight in the servile, slavish drudgery of sin and Satan.

(5th.) Do we now clearly see this gospel law of holiness? Do we understand from whence "the beauties of holiness" originate, and how we partake of them? Or perhaps this matter appears quite new to you. It may be, you considered holiness quite in another light. You thought you was to sanctify yourself, acquire holiness, and make yourself holy, by your holy works, pious performances, and godly doings. Where did you get this absurd notion? It is both unscriptural and irrational, and therefore contrary to faith and hope; and can never be accompanied with love, peace, joy, and happiness. Do you think Christ's new-born members are unholy, and left to sanctify themselves? that believers in Christ, and members of Christ, are not holy brethren in, and with Christ; but that by their own works and doings, they are to make themselves holy before the Lord? What! Do you eat, drink, walk, and perform the functions of life to make yourself a man? Does a woman by bearing children, make herself a woman? or do the light and heat from the sun, make it a sun? Strange! How long have you been thus labouring in the fire? What Egyptian task-master set you to work? What progress have you made? Are you one whit holier than you was when you first begun? It is impossible you should, you are not walking in the steps of faithful Abraham, nor the children of faith. For, whatsoever is not of faith, (so far from promoting holiness) is sin." Rom. xiv. 23.

(6th.) But do you thirst after holiness? It is a blessed sign. Of what? That you are dead in sin, and not sanctified in Christ. As soon could dead Lazarus ask for food, before Christ restored him to life. Hear then the precious reasoning of your loving Lord, "Wherefore do ye labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, (feed upon my truths, and my grace,) and let your soul delight itself in fatness, even the fatness of my everlasting covenant and sure mercies." Isaiah lv. 2, 3. As "made of God; sanctification to us," and that He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, holy brethren of him." Heb. ii. 11. For He says of all such, "They are

sanctified by faith, that is in ME." Acts xxvi. 18. If we are sanctified by faith in Christ, it is that we may live upon him, and receive holiness out of his fulness. But if we are seeking to make ourselves holy by our own works, we set at nought the gospel law of his covenant, reject his truth, and deny the faith of Christ, being made of God sanctification to us." 1 Cor. i. 30. "We do not sanctify the Lord God in our hearts." 1 Pet. iii. 15. But we fall under the censure of those who "sanctify and purify themselves in the gardens" of nature's pride, corrupt reason, and carnal unbelief. Isaiah lxvi. 17.

Now, are you ready to say? This is dark and mysterious, I do not know what to make of it. I fear it is licentious, and will lead me to be content without any holiness of life. God forbid. God grant it may bring our souls nearer to Christ, to live more upon him, and then I dare most boldly assert, we shall be more than ever in love with the beauties of holiness, in heart, lip, and life. This is our

Third point. The effects which the knowledge and belief of this Gospel-law of covenant grace hath upon our lives and conversations. Will any one say? Because the first Adam hath made us sinners, therefore we love holiness. So, will any one dare to say? Because the second Adam hath made us holy, therefore we love sin. We know the contrary. For each brought upon us a nature suited to their own; and that nature will manifest itself, in correspondent effects in our life and walk. By the first Adam we are dead in sin, and can bring forth nothing but sin: for nothing but sin dwells in our flesh. But "the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, is a quickening Spirit: our souls are made alive to God by him, and in love with holiness: for we are joined to him, and made one spirit with him." 1 Cor. vi. 17. therefore we bear the heavenly image of Jesus in us; and love to bring forth the *fruits* of righteousness, which are by him; and the *fruits* of holiness, which are to the glory of him, who is our root of holiness. Thus we are delivered from legality of heart, bondage of spirit, and perplexity of soul; and are enabled to serve the Lord without (servile) fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life. Luke i. 75.

(2d.) Concerning justification by the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life, because we say Christ is our righteousness, Paul demands, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the law." Rom. iii. 31. So concerning holiness of life. Do we make it void, because we say, Christ is our holiness, that we have no holiness in and from ourselves, but what we receive from him, who is our sanctification: the life and root of holiness in us; and we can bring forth no fruit of holiness in our lives, but as we abide

in him, believe in him, cleave to him, and derive holiness from him? Yea, we establish holiness of life. For by thus living and walking, we fear sin, hate sin, strive to perfect holiness of life, in the fear of the LORD, and delight to "have our *fruit* unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Rom. vi. 22. Now thus believing Christ to be our holiness, and deriving the beauties of holiness from him, is just as an effectual way to encourage us in a life of sin, and to be content without holiness, as playing an engine upon a fire, will cause it to burn with greater fierceness and violence. True, it may, and it is fit it should, extinguish our natural views, and legal aims of making ourselves holy, and working a holiness out of our own sinful nature, and by our legal, imperfect doings and performances. But what will be the end of all this? Why, with Peter, we shall confess, we have toiled all night and taken nothing. And also fall under this ironical censure, from the Lord, "Behold all ye who kindle a fire, who compass yourselves about with sparks, (of your imaginary holiness) walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. (Keep yourselves as warm and as comfortable as ye can, and as long as ye can. But what shall be the end, after all your vain heat, and comfortable glow?) This shall ye have at mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." Isaiah l. 11. The sorrow of disappointed pride, and the anguish of vain folly. For, says our Lord, "Without me, (separate from me, without union to me, abiding in me, depending on me, and cleaving to me, as the Lord your sanctification) ye can do nothing. John xv. 5. Not perform one duty, mortify one sin, or produce one fruit of holiness. Lord grant us to consider this more and more.

IMPROVEMENT.

SEE then how much the Lord's thoughts are above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways, in regard to the "beauties of holiness." Our thoughts and ways are natural, low, and legal: his spiritual, heavenly, and evangelical. Ours centering in ourselves: his fixed upon the Son of his love, in whom He is ever well pleased. See also the direct opposition between covenant grace and corrupt nature: divine faith and carnal sense. While one sees all, and seeks all righteousness, holiness, and salvation in Christ, the other expects to find all in self; and through the deceitful working of pride and ignorance, men get into a self-righteous, self-complacent, and self-applauding spirit, contrary to the faith of the Gospel. Such are the greatest enemies to the doctrines of the grace of God, and of righteousness, holiness, and salvation being communicated to us, out of the fulness of the Son of God. The Lord give us to know what vile sinners we are in ourselves, that we may

be humble ; and, to know Jesus Christ, and what inexhaustible treasures we have in Him.

A COLLECT.

LORD, open thou our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Deliver us from our proud, legal, and self-righteous spirits. Grant that we may comfortably see, and joyfully experience, that Christ of God is made sanctification to us, and is the life and root of holiness in us, that, living upon him, we may bring forth fruit unto thee, O God : the fruit of holiness, that our end may be everlasting life, to the praise and glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Forty-fourth Lord's Day.

ON LICENTIOUSNESS, OR ANTINOMIANISM.

Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. Jude 4.

It may seem not so pleasing to some, to call persons by the name of *Arians*, *Arminians*, or *Antinomians*, &c. But it seemed good to Christ, to call persons *Nicolaitans*, and to condemn their particular heresy. Revel. ii. 15. And in his Spirit, without any bitterness against their persons, we may distinguish those who hold such tenets, as are known by these names, without any more evil, than calling any one a protestant or papist, a churchman or dissenter: Yea, and we may expose and condemn those errors, which are held by persons going under such appellations, without the least breach of charity. For we may love their persons while we hate their notions; and we shall too, if we earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, as we are exhorted, Jude 3, in love. The Lord help us in this spirit, to meditate on the subject before us, and may he lead and guide us into all truth!

The late Rev. Mr. Hart, in the preface to his excellent experimental Hymns, makes this judicious remark, "PHARISAIC ZEAL, AND ANTINOMIAN SECURITY, are the two engines of Satan, with which he grinds the church in all ages, as betwixt the upper and nether mill-stone. The space between them, is much narrower, and harder to find, than most men imagine. 'Tis a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen, and none can shew it us but the Holy Ghost. Therefore, let the christian ask direction of his God."—And I will add, to his prayers, let him ever obey our Lord, "search the Scriptures." John v. 39. And this, as ever seeing our danger to err, and our proneness on the right hand and left to be deceived. But blessed be our God, He hath assured us, that our way shall be a high way, (like a spacious turnpike road, with stone marks and mercuries for directions) the way of holiness, and the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Isaiah xxxv. 8. Nevertheless, the Lord's word abounds with descriptions of bye paths, and dangerous roads, that we may shun and avoid them. The text informs us of a destructive way some take. Therefore let us consider, (1st.) What we are here to understand by the grace of God. (2d.) What is meant by turning it into lasciviousness. The Lord in mercy give us the blessed experience of the former, and restrain us by his love, from the

cursed evil of the latter. To this may we, and all his people say, Amen.

First, what are we to understand by the grace of God? neither more nor less than his mercy, favour, or good will. We frequently add the adjective free to it, and call it, the free grace of God. O, how sweetly does this sound in a sinner's ear! How joyful is it to his heart! When I was at first taught to understand the Gospel, I thought the term **FREE GRACE**, was like most joyful music to my soul. Luther was wont to say of St. Paul, that Christ, and free grace, were ever on his tongue. He thought he could never speak of them too oft, nor magnify them too much. But how is God's free grace, free mercy, free favour, or good will, made known? By the word or gospel of his grace. This presents to our view: this brings to our ears, yea, to our hearts, the glad tidings of this grace, to sinners. Hence it is called, "The gospel, or good news, of the grace of God." Acts xx. 24. But how is this grace manifested? Verily, in such a way as constrains us to call it free grace indeed!

(1st.) By our election in Christ, "God hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world—according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace." Ephes. i. 4, &c. This must be a free choice, of free grace. No one before he had existence, could do any thing to deserve this. But might not God foresee, that we should do something in life, to render ourselves the fit objects of his choice, such as believe the Gospel, repent of our sins, and become obedient to God's will, &c.? If these things are found with us, and in us, they do not spring from us. They all flow from God's love for us, and his favour to us. They are the gifts of his grace. "Faith is the gift of God." Ephes. ii. 8. "Christ is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance." Acts v. 31. "And it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. ii. 13. God who elected us to salvation as the end, chose us to partake of the graces of his Spirit, as the means. So that nothing on our part goes before the free grace of God, to render us fit for it, or entitle us to it. As soon suppose Lazarus exerted some signs of life, before Christ spoke life into him. "The godly consideration of our election IN CHRIST, is full of sweet, pleasant, unspeakable comfort, to godly persons," says the 17th article of the church of England. But we know nothing of this, till

(2d.) The grace of God is manifest in our regeneration. For in consequence of election to glory, we are made partakers of grace here. Therefore, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to God's mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ

our Saviour." Tit. iii. 5, 6. Hence our souls are made alive to God, and sanctified to his glory. We are delivered from our naturally wicked, and ungodly state and practice. Hence the grace of God is manifested,

(3d.) In our calling unto Christ, yea into Christ, to be members of him, joined to him, and become one with him, "By the faith of the operation of God." Col. ii. 12. It is "the God of all grace who hath called us, unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." 1 Pet. v. 10. Now we have blessed fellowship with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and therefore hate fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. For,

(4th.) We experience the grace of God, manifest in our justification by faith in Christ. For our sins are all pardoned by his blood, and our souls justified in his righteousness. We have peace with God in our consciences. There is now no condemnation against us, for we are in Christ Jesus new creatures, in a new state, with new dispositions and affections. And therefore, "Being justified by God's grace, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Tit. iii. 7. Yea, "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17. And hence,

(5th.) God's grace is displayed in our perseverance unto eternal glory. "For, we are kept by the power of God, through faith unto eternal salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. And, not only is God's power engaged to keep all his justified heirs unto eternal life, but he has confirmed the immutability of his counsel, by his solemn oath, for their consolation, safety, and security." Heb. vi. 17. "This is the true grace of God, wherein we stand." 1 Pet. v. 12. "By this grace, we have our conversation in the world." 2 Cor. i. 12. "For the grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, (in the word of his grace it is revealed to ALL) teaching us, (all we who have received the truth in love) that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Tit. ii. 11, &c. Now all these truths concerning the grace of God, are as clearly, and as plainly revealed in his word, as that Christ came into the world to save sinners. And they will be the joy, and the glory of our hearts, and our lives will be under the holy influence of them, if we receive and believe the truth, as it is in Jesus.

Secondly. What is meant by turning this grace of our God into lasciviousness? But before we proceed one step farther, let us pause, and reflect, how abominably vile, how detestably base, human nature must be, that can turn such unmerited grace, such free favour, such undeserved good will from a God of love, into lasciviousness of conduct, and licentiousness of life? Yet how many of the sons of men daringly do this? Yea, to

come nearer home, you and I have that very nature in us, which is ever prone to do this. O, what deep humility, what constant watchfulness, what continual prayer, should this ever excite in us! For,

(1st) To turn this revealed grace of our God into lasciviousness, is to turn these doctrines of God's favour to sinners, into a corrupt view, and to charge them with the most abominable consequences, as having a direct tendency to make men live ungodly, walk profanely, and commit all iniquity with greediness. Hence men of corrupt minds resist the truth, and have no *judgment* concerning the faith." 2 Tim. iii. 8. Therefore, like a bad stomach, they destroy the nutritious qualities of the most salutary food. This is a most dreadful species of licentiousness, a creature can be guilty of against the Lord of infinite wisdom, unspotted purity, and everlasting love. And yet, how many persons professing godliness, dare thus wantonly and arrogantly indulge themselves? Compared to this, what are all the gross, abominable, outward sins, which men wallow in, who make no profession of religion? true, they blaspheme God's name, profane his Sabbaths, set at naught his word, despise his Son, and neglect his salvation. But they do not pretend to charge the doctrines of his grace with making them licentious in their lives, and ungodly in their practices. They do not thus turn the doctrines of the grace of God into wantonness. They neither know, understand, nor care at all about them. Though they are abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, yet they commit not this execrable sin of daringly replying against God's sacred truths, calling in question his divine sovereignty, turning the doctrines of his special grace into wantonness, and charging them with making men continue in sin, because grace abounds to sinners; and to be licentious in their practices, because God reveals his everlasting love to sinners—his free choice of them—regenerating influence in them—his full justification of them—his power in keeping them, in the fear and love of himself—and at last crowning them in heaven, to the praise of the glory of his own grace. No. All this is the sin, the detestable sin, of persons of more refined heads, and more reformed lives; who are too full of the pride of their free-will power, natural ability, moral rectitude, and good works, to be indebted to the love of God, the election of his grace, the regeneration of his Spirit, the righteousness of his Son, the preservation of his power, and the gift of his kingdom: For such see not themselves guilty before God. Their mouths are not stopped. They dare charge God foolishly, and treat his grace wantonly, by applying every evil to it, which their vain minds suggest against it. These, whatever they may think of themselves, or

others think of them, St. Jude styles, "ungodly men." And declares, "The Lord cometh to execute judgment upon them, for their *hard speeches*, which they have spoken against him." ver 15. St. Paul calls this "being vainly puffed up, by a fleshly mind." Col. ii. 18. And hence such proudly judge of, and arrogantly condemn the spiritual truths of God, according to their carnal reason and fleshly wisdom. The Lord help us to see the evil of this, to be humble before Him; and to pray to be kept from thus turning his grace into lasciviousness, by ungodly speeches. For all those doctrines of God's grace which were recited, are according to godliness. But if we reject any of them, we deprive our hearts of the comfort contained in them, and our lives of the influence of them to God's glory. As God's truths are the warrant and rule of our faith, so they lie at the foundation of our comfort and hope, and at the source and spring of all holiness and obedience.

(2d.) We are in danger of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, by resting contented in carnal security, with a notion of the doctrines of grace in our heads, without experiencing the life, power, and influence of those doctrines upon our hearts and lives. There is such a thing in profession, as being like rickety children, whose heads are very large, but their loins so weak they cannot walk. Knowledge of Scripture doctrines, may be obtained in a scientific way, without their entering into the heart, causing us to feel their importance as miserable sinners, leading us to Christ as the only Saviour, so as to set our affections upon him, cleave to him, abide in him, drink into the Spirit of him, receive out of his fulness, enjoy fellowship with him, and become followers of him, in the regeneration. This is to be all profession of Christ, without any life from Christ. And where this is the case, such professors make wanton work with the doctrines of grace.

As to any internal, sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God upon their hearts and affections, producing love to God, fear of Him, delight in Him, devotion of heart, lip, and life, to the glory of Him, they are strangers to, and therefore deride all this, as poor, low, and legal stuff. They live far above it. They breathe the fine *utopian* air of speculation and imagination. Gospel realities are too gross for their refined taste. Butameleon like, they dwell on the rocks of their exalted ideas, and like him too, live upon the air. The graces of the Spirit they want not, for Christ had them without measure. He repented, believed, and obeyed for them. The duties of the gospel they despise, for Christ hath performed all these for them. As to the ordinances, they are above them: Christ is their only ordinance. As to any real, personal holiness, this they deny: they want no holiness in themselves, Christ has all

holiness in him. But he communicates none to them. Christ has done every thing *for* them, without doing any thing *in* them, or subduing sin under them. Yes, said a person to one of this stamp, talking in this wild, licentious manner, Christ has done one thing more, which you have not mentioned, which is this, he is gone to heaven *for you* also, where you are never like to go, if you live and die in this cursed spirit of ungodly delusion.

Now these are called *Antinomians*. I have conversed with many of them. Grosser perverters of the Scriptures, more vile turners of the grace of God into wantonness, more licentious opposers of the true spirit and genius of christianity, never appeared in any age of the church, than these professors of our day. The appellation of *Antinomians*, is not so well suited to them, as that of *Libertines*. For they profess to be under no restraint, either of law or Gospel, love or fear, religious or moral. Their fundamental principle is, that Christ died for all men, therefore all shall be saved, let them live as they list. Hence it is natural enough for them to continue in sin, that grace may abound. For they licentiously say, "Why should God give us such and such passions, if we may not gratify them? The more sin we commit, the more will God be glorified in pardoning us." Lord! what is human nature, if left by thee! O, what cursed, corrupt, licentious consequences, will it not draw from the most pure, holy, heavenly doctrines of thy precious grace, and unparalleled love to sinners! O, let us watch and pray, against the very appearance of such dreadful evils!

The name of *Libertines*, is certainly more suitable to such licentious professors, than that of *Antinomians*. For that means those who are *against the law*, in point of justification: and is applied to those who hold, that no works of obedience of ours to the law of God, can either, in whole or in part, justify us in the sight of God; but that it is Christ's obedience unto death, or that righteousness which he wrought out in our nature, which is imputed to, and is the sole cause of any sinner's justification before God. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one who believeth." Rom. x. 4. But for openly professing this, it is now, and has been the fate of some of the most holy and unblamable persons, to be called Antinomians. Even the late reverend and exemplary Mr. Hervey, escaped not to glory without this hard name, from persons utterly ignorant of the doctrines of the grace of God. And who that ever professed the true grace of God, has escaped this censure? The least and meanest of all, passes under this name with some; though he blesses God, he never felt the weight of it himself. It sits very easy on him. He hopes to

live and die such an Antinomian. And declares, as if with his dying breath, that he firmly believes, and is fully assured, that in no other way does GOD make any sinner righteous, and justify him in his sight, than by imputing the perfect, everlasting righteousness of his beloved Son to him. So that, as the homily of the Church of England declares, "Christ is the righteousness of all who truly believe in him. He for them paid their ransom by his death. He for them fulfilled the law in his life. So that now, in and by Christ, every Christian may be called a fulfiller of the law." They are as much freed from its curse, as though they had never sinned. They are as righteous before GOD, as if they had kept the whole law perfectly themselves. Though GOD never does make any sinner thus righteous in his Son, but He also regenerates that soul by his Holy Spirit; and unites him to Christ by a holy faith. So that he hates all sin, and loves holiness. Yea, he can say, with holy Paul, "I delight in the law of GOD, after the inward man." Rom. vii. 22. And it is, and will be, the constant study, and daily practice of such souls, to go on, perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD; firmly believing, the more holiness, the more heaven upon earth. For holiness springs from the life, presence, and communion of Jesus, who is our heaven. This we enjoy by a holy faith. According to this faith, we confess. "We are not without law to GOD, but under the law to Christ." 1 Cor. ix. 21, even the law of love. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Rom. viii. 2. And therefore seeing the law fulfilled for us by Christ, our persons righteous in him, and our souls under eternal obligations to him, we receive the law as a rule of life, we study to walk in faith, and obey in love, all its righteous precepts, to the honour and glory of Christ, who hath loved, justified and saved us, from all its curse, wrath, and penalties.

Therefore be not deceived. For where this love of Christ is wanting in the heart, and this living upon Christ, and walking with Christ, is not manifest in the life, whatever men's profession may be, they most certainly corrupt the doctrines of grace, turn them into licentiousness, or hold some cursed lie within them, which blinds their understanding, perverts their judgment, alienates their affections, and deceives their souls into a fatal security. O then, how jealous ought we to be over ourselves, with a godly jealousy! It behoves us with David, ever to be crying to the Lord, "Search me, O GOD, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. O, let us ever watch and pray against every species of licentiousness; that dead formality, spiritual sloth,

stupidity of mind, carnality of conversation, and worldly dispositions, which so abound among professors, and eat up the life, power, and consolation of God's grace in the heart? God grant us, ever to live and act under the influence of that truth, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Rom. xiv. 23.

A COLLECT.

O God of all grace, what vile wretches, what abominable sinners are we, whose nature is prone to abuse thy rich grace, and to turn it to the basest purposes! Lord, in mercy, humble, pardon, keep, and sanctify us day by day. O, let us prove thy grace sufficient for us, and thy strength, O Saviour, made perfect in our weakness, to the glory of thy name, and the salvation of our souls. Amen.

The Forty-fifth Lord's Day.

ON HUMBLING OURSELVES.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty Hand of God, that He may exalt you in due Season. 1 Pet. v. 6.

OUR bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made. Our lives, through ten thousand dangers, are amazingly preserved. Our health, though exposed to innumerable diseases, is marvellously continued. Physicians tell us, that it is necessary for the health of the body, that there are various excrements, which must be thrown off; and certain recrements, which must be retained. This is true in respect to the health of the soul. Pride may be considered as an injurious excrement, which is absolutely necessary to be cast off. Humility, which is as a balsamic recrement, is constantly to be retained. In order that the soul may prosper, and be in good health, this is to be our daily exercise. Peter, who had been well instructed by the great Physician of souls, here prescribes a most salutary medicine: a medicine which, by repeated experience, he had found to be of the greatest efficacy to his soul's health. However nauseous to the stomach of our proud natures, yet this medicine certainly is productive of the greatest good, in preventing peccant humours from arising, and sharp diseases from spreading in the soul. He that least applies to this medicine, will be most unhappy in his spirit. He who constantly uses it, will be most peaceful in his minds. Let us therefore consider,

(1st.) The nature of the duty here enjoined.

(2dly.) The necessity for the constant practice of it.

(3dly.) The blessed end or reason for it.

First. The nature of this duty, *Humble yourselves, &c.* But, before I write, or you read another word, let us look to, and pray the meek and lowly Jesus, to teach us this blessed art, which we are naturally ignorant of, and utterly averse to. The Lord grant us so to feel the force, and see the nature of this command, that we may obey it to his glory, and our souls' good. This duty is to be practised upon ourselves. And a very difficult work it is, because it is quite contrary to our corrupt natures, pride and sinful passions. To humble ourselves implies, that we resist every high thought, repel every lofty imagination, and reject every swelling conceit of ourselves: abasing ourselves in our own minds, loathing ourselves in our own eyes, and abhorring ourselves in our own sight, as filthy creatures

and abominable sinners. It is to know and consider ourselves, even as we are known of a heart-searching God, and as we are described by his word of truth. It is to do violence to our very nature, by stemming its rapid stream. It is to afflict ourselves. How? By whipping and chastising the body, as the papists do? No. But by afflicting our minds. If you attend to the working of your mind, you will find how natural it is soothed, pleased, and tickled, into a fond conceit of yourself, by hearing any thing spoke well of you. This you are instantly to reject. Thus you will afflict your mind, by not suffering it to feed its vanity, and elate its pride. You hear others speak evil of you. If you do not humble yourself, this will stir up anger in you. But if you are humbling yourself, you are before-hand with, and prepared for such treatment. You know, no one can speak so much evil of you as you find and feel within you. But this way of reasoning will never prove effectual to cause us to humble ourselves, therefore it is added, "under the mighty hand of God."

This is the glory of the Gospel; it ever presents an object to our view, whom to look to, under whose influence to act, to whom to direct all our doings, and in all to strive to please him. Without this, all is but dry, heathenish reasoning, upon this, or any other point of virtue. But the faith of this, enlivens every duty, and invigorates every exercise. O Christian, remember the mighty hand of God is over you, has been stretched forth and exerted in your behalf, and has done wonderful things for you. And, you live daily, hourly, under the mighty hand of God, therefore humble yourself under it. See, own, and acknowledge, that this hand hath done all for you, and in you. The faith of this, will cause you to humble yourself under it. Pride arises from ignorance, and is maintained for want of due consideration of what we are, and what the mighty hand of God hath done for us. Vain fancy is the offspring of pride and ignorance. True knowledge kills both the parent and offspring, and sacrifices them upon the altar of faith, to the glory of the mighty hand of God. O, my fellow sinner! O, my soul! where had we been? what would have become of us, if the mighty hand of God had not been stretched out in behalf of us? Say, what hath the mighty hand of God done: yea, what hath it not done for us? Who formed us? Who gave us our being? Who continues us in being? Who gives us the comforts of our being, and health to enjoy them? Do not all flow from the mighty, the liberal hand of God? But sin has brought destruction upon all our enjoyments, and death, to put an end of our existence here. But here, also, the mighty hand of God has interposed, to put an end to sin, and to destroy death. How?

See the mighty hand of **GOD** revealed. Behold its mighty works, and marvellous doings, in the person of his beloved Son, "The **MAN** of his right hand," Psal. lxxx. 17; even that wonderful **MAN**, who has wrought out salvation for us, and brought in righteousness to us. View his finished work on mount Calvary. Rejoice in his triumphant resurrection from the tomb. Exult in his glorious ascension from the earth. Shout aloud, for he is entered into the presence of **GOD** for us, and ever lives to save us unto the uttermost. And—What? humble yourselves under the believing view of all this. Its weight of love, and matchless grace, is sufficient to exalt us to the utmost heights of glory, and to sink into the lowest shame, and deepest humility. Let faith look. Let love speak, and the heart must sink into the valley of profound humility, and cry, Was ever love, was ever sufferings, was ever grace, O **LAMB** of **GOD**, like thine, to such undeserving, such hell-deserving wretches as we!

But we could neither see, believe, nor adore for, and rejoice in, what the mighty hand of **GOD** hath done for us, unless his mighty hand had been revealed in, and upon us. For, dead in trespasses and sins, in nature's ruined state we lay. No eye to see, no ear to hear, no heart to understand, the love and salvation of an incarnate **GOD**, nor to lament the miseries of our immortal souls. Who quickened our souls, opened our eyes, regenerated our spirits, possessed us of faith, convinced us of sin, caused us to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and cry to Jesus, Lord save, or I perish? Pride avaunt. Sober reason, and unfeigned humility reply. Must not this be the language? "Not unto us, O **LORD**, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Ps. cxv. 1. All **GOD**'s mercy to sinners, flows from and through his truth, even Jesus, who is "THE TRUTH." John xiv. 6. And therefore, faith in Jesus, causes us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and confess this. Let us therefore consider,

Secondly. The necessity for the constant practice of thus humbling ourselves. This is needful, because sin dwells in us, and communion with Christ is to be enjoyed by us. Even though, by the grace of **GOD**, we are regenerated by his Spirit, are believers in Christ, and children of **GOD**, by the faith of him; yet, we are in ourselves sinners; poor miserable, blind, and naked sinners: we have in ourselves nothing wherein to trust, or whereof to glory. Our graces of faith, hope, love, &c. shall we pride ourselves for them? Verily, they are the gifts of **GOD**. They spring not from us. They are experienced in us, are but like the changing moon, waxing and waning: now increasing, anon declining. To-day, we are strong in faith, rejoicing in hope: to-morrow, bowed down by unbelief, and

sorrowing in dejection. But indeed, in our most comfortable frames, and happiest seasons, we have the greatest reason, not to be high-minded, but fear: not to be self-confident, but to humble ourselves. Remember Peter. Call to mind Paul's buffetings. Forget our Lord's charge against the Church, for "trusting in her beauty, and playing the harlot, because of her renown, for that comeliness which Christ had put upon her." Ezek. xvi. 14. While sin dwells continually in us, we have constant need to humble ourselves. For, communion with Christ is to be enjoyed by us. But,

Not only are our hearts dreadfully wicked, but also superlatively deceitful. Here lies their treachery, in turning from the Lord our righteousness, strength, and hope to ourselves, to look for righteousness, in ourselves, strength from ourselves, and hope, from what we can do for ourselves. Though again and again beat off from this legal spirit, yet it naturally works in us, and causes us, instead of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, to exalt us above it, makes us forget our constant need of it, and how much we are indebted to it. Pride is interwoven with our very nature. It works by self-confidence, and self-dependence; and it tends to exalt a sinful worm of the earth, into a mighty, self-sufficient, self-important being. Hence, though we know the words of Christ, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5; yet we lose the feeling sense of their importance, and our constant need of dependence on him, and strength from him. Though without Christ we cannot mortify one sin, exercise one grace, nor perform one duty, yet how often, through the vanity of pride, do we forget him, and expose our folly. Our Lord says, "Abide in me," John xv. 4, in sensible fellowship with me. But this we cannot enjoy, unless self-emptied, and self-humbled. "He fills the hungry with good things. The rich he sends empty away." Luke i. 53. A sense of spiritual riches and fulness, is a bar to communion with Christ. Humbling ourselves under his mighty hand, empties the soul of them, and makes room for our Lord's presence. Hence he says, "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted." Isai. ii. 17.

The Lord is jealous of his glory. He will not give it to another. You shall not take it to yourself. Do you love him? Do you fear to offend him? Do you delight to exalt him? Do you not find somewhat in you, which works contrary to this? Do you not find loftiness of mind and haughtiness of spirit? The Lord says, these shall be bowed down, and made low. See you not the constant necessity to be jealous over your own heart, and to humble yourself continually? So sure as the Lord loves you, he will humble you. So sure as you love

the Lord, desire to enjoy him, delight in fellowship with him, have known and experienced what his mighty hand hath done for you, and wrought in you, you will humble yourself under it. Yea, you will humble yourself for your low, mean thoughts of his mighty hand, and those high and exalted ones, which you have entertained of your mighty self—your faithfulness to grace received—your kind compliance in accepting offered grace—your passive yieldings to the terms of the Gospel—your ready activity in fulfilling the conditions of salvation—the tractableness of your free will, in working together with God, in the salvation of your soul, &c. All these vain notions, which have foolishly puffed you up, you will see constant need of humbling yourself for; and will cast away all such rash talk and trash stuff. Like mariners in a storm, you will see the necessity of casting such lumber overboard, to lighten your ship, and to exalt your Lord; that he may, “as it pleased the Father he should have the pre-eminence in ALL THINGS.” Col. i. 18.

Therefore it is, that he commands us to humble ourselves. This command is from love. Obedience to it, is the test of love. Every species of pride, tends to dethrone Christ, and rob him of his pre-eminence in our hearts and affections. By humbling ourselves, we put down those base usurpers. Unless Christ has the pre-eminence in all things, God is not pleased, his peace cannot be enjoyed, our souls cannot be happy. Liftings up of heart, will bring on dejection of soul. But “before honour is humility.” Prov. xv. 33. Here then are some weighty reasons why we should humble ourselves. Because we are poor sinners, yet prone to pride, and to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think—Fellowship with Christ is to be maintained: humbled souls only can enjoy this—The Lord in love commands us to humble ourselves. If we love the Lord, we shall study to obey, and strive to please him. Let us,

Thirdly, consider the blessed end of this. “That the Lord may exalt you in due season; or in his time.” You shall surely be exalted, though not in your time and way: yet in God’s. You must not exalt yourself. That will hurt you. God will do that for you. This shall bless you. But you must wait. These are hard lines to nature. She will spurn and kick against them. How is her insolence to be checked, and her impatience curbed? The Lord has provided against this. Take that bridle. It is sufficient to manage the most vicious steed. There is none like it. “The just, (or justified sinner) shall live by his faith.” Heb. ii. 4. How by his faith? Not upon his believing, but what he believes. God’s word, God in his word: God in Christ: salvation by Christ: all the precious

promises of God in Christ, he shall, live by feed upon, and find his soul nourished with. For, as the soul is emptied by humility, it shall be filled with faith, the peace, the hope, the joy, the assurance of faith, and the exalting of faith.

But will not this feed vanity, and elate pride? No. Not unless you are so egregiously mistaken and misled, as to put faith in the room of its object; to value yourself for your faith, look to it as your excellence, and call it your righteousness: instead of living upon the fulness of Christ,—that grace and truth which came by him,—and those great and precious promises which are in him. For he hath said, “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Luke xiv. 11. Here is a precious word for faith to live upon; bless the Lord for, and wait for the experience of its full accomplishment. Do you see daily cause for humility? Do you humble yourself? Are you desirous to do it more and more, under the mighty hand of God which hath wrought out salvation, and brought you to receive it as a lost sinner? Then hear, believe, and rejoice, at these astonishing words. For, however low, humbled, dejected, and distressed you may be, yet, “Thus saith the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also, who is of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Isai. lvii. 15.

Well Christian, what say you to all this? What think you, of your humbling yourself now, and of the Lord’s exalting you in due time? Though you may now be esteemed by men, as a poor, moping, melancholy thing, unfit for their converse, and unworthy their company, and your name cast out as evil, for the Son of man’s sake, because you cannot rejoice with their joy; yet hear the joy of faith. Behold what special love to, and peculiar regard the high and lofty One declares he has for you. Let who will reject you, He will revive you. O, how precious is it to think of God’s exalting us, and to trust to that! For the Lord’s word shall not fail. His truth shall be fulfilled.

Peter, in the text, honours our Lord’s promissory note. He receives, endorses it, negotiates, or pays it away to his brethren. Its contents are, “Humble yourselves, and God shall exalt you. Reader, have you faith in your Lord? Will you credit his note? Will you be content to wait his satisfying it? Mind, it bears no date. Do not attempt to fix one to it! If you forge a date, you expose yourself to punishment. It runs in “due time.” Do you ask, When is that? His own time. This you are humbly to wait for. And if you are humble, you will say; That is the best time. As his word cannot fail, his due time shall come.

But how will God exalt the humble? Just as he exalted Mordecai over his inveterate enemy Haman. Esther vi. So shall it be done to the humble man, whom the King of kings delights to honour. He shall ride triumphantly over all his spiritual enemies. Sin, which threatened his destruction, he shall have power over. The law which cursed him he shall have freedom from. Satan, who with infernal malice assaulted him, shall be overcome by him, and flee from him. The world which enticed and allured him, he shall have victory over. Death, which terrified him, he shall triumph over, as a conquered foe. Yea, "over all things, he shall be more than conqueror, through Christ who loved him. Rom. viii. 37. But who can say, how God will eternally exalt those hereafter, who humbled themselves under his mighty hand here? This, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what good things the Lord hath prepared for his people, in his kingdom. There he will exalt them to the heights of endless glory, and immortal happiness, where they will be incessantly engaged in the same humble work which they begun on earth, of casting their crowns before the throne, and ascribing the glory, honour, and praise of their salvation, to God and the LAMB, for ever and ever. Amen.

A COLLECT.

O KING of Saints, and Lord of glory, who didst humble thyself for our sakes, and didst become a Man to save us, give us of thy humility, and teach us to humble ourselves daily before thee. Lord, conquer pride in us, and make us little, low, and mean in our own eyes. Keep down our self-exalting spirit, and make us content to be exalted by thy grace over all our spiritual enemies. Grant this for thy glory, O God our Saviour, Amen.

The Forty-sixth Lord's Day.

ON MAN'S STATE AND DOOM.

Dust thou art, and unto Dust thou shalt return. Gen. iii. 19.

"WHO could have thought it?" This motto is inscribed under the drawing of a blue-coat boy, on the coach of a merchant of this city, who was brought up in Christ's Hospital. It is very striking and significant, if meant to display an humble sense of what he was, and a grateful sense of God's blessing upon his industry, in raising him to what he now is. O, Christian! In what a variety of views may we adopt this motto, "Who could have thought it?" Had we seen our first father Adam, in his primæval state of innocence, perfect in the image of his God, completely happy in himself, and ever joyful in the Author of his being; and view him in a short time after, when he had brought guilt and curse upon himself, and ruin and misery upon all his posterity, could we help crying out, "Who could have thought it?" That God should no sooner pronounce a curse upon him, but proclaim a blessing to him, who could have thought it? That any sinner should be made righteous, pardoned, and accepted in Christ, and enjoy the comfort of this by faith, and yet so soon lose the sense of the comfort, joy, and peace of the day of his espousals to Christ, who could have thought it? That God should woo, and intreat such base backsliders from him, and never leave them till they return unto him, who could have thought it?

Well, humility and hope should ever accompany each other. Humble in self, and hopeful in Christ, should never be separated in the Christian's heart. The word of God powerfully teaches both, and the Spirit of God, by the knowledge and belief of the Word, begets and maintains both, in the hearts of the faithful in Christ. A real Christian never does, nor ever can, totally lose sight either of his low and miserable state as a sinner, or of his high and exalted state, as he is in Christ, made righteous, justified, and saved. But yet, we are too prone on one hand to forget what we are in ourselves, and to think more highly of ourselves, than we ought to think: while, on the other hand, we are too apt to lose sight of our precious Saviour, let go the comfort of hope in him, and get into dejection and distress. It is a precious lesson, and it is our wisdom to be learning it daily. O may God the Spirit teach it us powerfully; namely, to be nothing in our own eyes, and to

see Christ all in all to us. Every portion of God's word instructs us in this, and therefore, every portion of it should be precious to us.

The LORD, the Almighty God speaks (let every sinner hear, fear, and be humble before him) this solemn, this awful word, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." An able statesman, and a wise merchant, will make all advantages of every piece of intelligence they can gain, concerning themselves and the affairs of their kingdom. O Christian imitate them. Here is a word of instruction concerning yourself. What use, what advantage will you make of it? Let us lift up our eyes, our hearts, our voices to the sovereign Speaker, and cry to him to impress our too thoughtless hearts with a deep and affecting sense of what we now are, dust, and of what we must soon return to, dust. May he enable us to improve the present moment to his glory, and our soul's good, by some suitable reflections upon it.

First. Dust thou art. What, so ignoble as dust? It is trodden under the feet of men, and is no esteem in their eyes. Just so are we in the sight of God. For, as the Psalmist speaks, "The enemy hath laid our honour in the dust." Ps. vii. 5. We are as a thing of nought, and without honour before God. There is nothing in us, for which he should esteem us: nothing can be done by us, which can merit his favour, or deserve his love. O King of Assyria, "thy nobles shall dwell in the dust," Nahum iii. 18; this is verified in us. For, all the noble, divine, exalted faculties, with which our souls were originally endowed, are now corrupted and depraved by sin, and dwell in a body of ignoble dust: so that in ourselves "we are without honour, have no understanding, and are like the beasts that perish," Ps. xlix. 20; and our dust is as ignoble as theirs. For, as the Preacher says, "That which befallerh the sons of men, befallerh beasts, even one thing befallerh them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they all have one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, (that is as a mere creature, in a natural sense) for all is vanity." Eccles. iii. 19.

(2d.) Dust is of a light nature, liable to be put in motion, agitated, and blown about by every puff of wind. So are we. How does a small breath of opposition agitate our minds, and raise our natural passions? We are liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, and subject to be agitated by the blasts of temptations and afflictions. The Lord causeth his wind (of affliction) to blow; and the waters (tears of sorrow) to flow." Psal. cxlvii. 18. Light, unstable, and fluctuating as dust, is man, he is weighed in the balance and found wanting, in all he is and all he does.

(3d.) Dust is offensive to clean persons, so are we in the sight of a pure God; yea, offensive to ourselves and others also. When the dust flies in clouds, how offensive to travellers? So disgusting in a variety of instances does the dust of our lusts, passions, and corruptions render us to our fellow-travellers to Zion, and to our fellow-creatures upon the earth. Yea, while travelling through this waste howling desert, how often does the dust of our lusts, corruptions and unbelief, fly like clouds, to the darkening our own views of spiritual objects, to the offending our souls, and disturbing our peace? Hence, we often experience, and are ready to say with David, "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Psalm xxii. 15.

(4th.) It is natural to dust to breed vermin: so it is with us. Its soil is suited to their nature: so is ours. Hence, what swarms of vile lusts, filthy thoughts, vain imaginations, corrupt notions, carnal reasonings, blasphemous sentiments, &c. are found in us? Surely, these are the worst of vermin, as offensive as the croaking toad, and the venomous adder. Yet such vermin have their birth in us, live and are nourished by the dust of our vile nature. It is the sight and sense of this that makes saints groan, and hence we hear a Job cry out, "Behold I am vile," Job xl. 4; and an apostle exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" Rom. vii. 24.

Is it so? Are we but dust, ignoble, light, offensive, vermin-breeding dust? Do we see, know, are we sensible that this really is our case? Then we shall readily join issue with the Psalmist. "Verily, every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." And he adds, "Selah," that is, Consider this deeply and attentively, Psalm xxxix. 5; which, if we do, we shall improve the consideration, and cry out with him, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, quicken thou me in thy way." Ps. cxix. 37. This is the cry of animated dust, quickened into spiritual life, by the breath of the Almighty Lord the Spirit. Let us consider it.

(1st.) Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. What is vanity? The enlightened, the regenerate soul, knows he need not go far in search of it, nor be at any pains to give a description of it. For he will present himself, and say, Behold vanity itself in me. Yea, I am altogether vanity, even in my best estate: unprofitable, empty, weak, and full of iniquity. And therefore, all such will cry continually. Turn away mine eyes from myself; as though the poor sinner had just got a sight of himself, in the clear glass of God's holy law, and seeing what a hideous figure he is, deformed by sin, defaced by corruption, and rendered so odious in his own eyes,

that he could not bear the sight of himself, he cries out with earnest eagerness, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." But if so,

(2d.) Why does he not turn away his own eyes from such a sight? Why cry to the Lord to do it? Here is the mystery of iniquity. Here is also the mystery of grace in the heart. Though we are but dust and vanity, yet we are very vain in thinking something of ourselves, and very prone to indulge proud thoughts of ourselves. And though the Lord tells us, Dust thou art; and we again and again have proved this truth, that in us dwells no good thing; yet we are again and again prone to be looking at ourselves, to find somewhat to be pleased and delighted with, and wherein to place our confidence, and to establish our self-righteous hope. Such is the mystery of iniquity which works in us. But here is the mystery of grace. Where the free, unmerited favour of God in Christ to sinners, shines in the heart, that poor sinner is truly sensible of his weakness, vanity, and impotence, and that he is not sufficient of himself to think or do any thing, as of himself. Hence he is little and low in his own sight, yet he is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, through the belief of his Word of grace and truth. Hence he turns away from himself, turns to the Lord, and cries to him, "Thine is the power." O turn away this vain heart, and these lofty eyes of mine, from beholding vanity, and placing any confidence of hope in any object, besides thy loving, compassionate, ever-blessed self, O my God and Saviour. Therefore,

(3d.) As this cry of such an heart, manifests its abhorrence of itself as dust and vanity, and confesses its own weakness to turn away from it, as well as its proneness to look unto it; so it also displays faith in the Lord's everlasting love, and reliance upon his almighty power. Thus, we who are but dust, vain dust, honour the Lord of grace, love and power: and thus, the gracious end of the Lord, in pronouncing, Dust thou art, is answered upon the sinner.

Has it had this effect upon you? Do you thus see yourself, and view your vile state? However distressing such a sight and view may be, yet it is most salutary to the soul: for it makes it truly humble, drives the sinner out of himself, to the foot of the cross of our precious Saviour, there to live and look, and love him, who pitied us in our low estate; and, notwithstanding all our faults and failings, loves us from his very heart, and will never turn away from us to do us good: For, in all and under all, "He knoweth our frame: he remembers that we are dust." Psal. ciii. 14. O what a special mercy for us, who are dust, to have such a merciful and compassionate High-priest to look unto, who is touched with the most tender feeling of our infir-

mities, and who ever lives to love us, pity us, pray for, and save us ! O what praises are due to God the loving Spirit, for giving us the knowledge of, and faith in our precious Saviour !

But, if the former part of this sentence, "Dust thou art," is a mortal stab to our pride; the latter part, "Unto dust shalt thou return," is a death-wound to all hope in ourselves. So the Lord who pronounced it, graciously intended it should. For, "we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raised the dead." 2 Cor. i. 9. Our once crucified and dead Saviour being raised, he is the resurrection of our dead hope, and the life of our quickened souls. Hence we cry again to God, "Quicken thou me in thy way." Psal. cxix. 37.

Secondly. Unto dust must I soon return? Is the thought full of gloom and melancholy? Is it dejecting and distressing? Must this body be laid in the grave, and these active limbs moulder into dust? Does this strike a chill of terror through my heart? Blessed be God, in this view of death, we have his power to look to for hope and comfort, and to cry to in faith, Lord quicken me; excite and stir up my soul, and make me lively; raise up and cheer my languid spirits. O, we want daily and constant quickening. But, no man can quicken his own soul. This is an experienced truth. So is this also. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." John vi. 63. David well knew this. He found he could get no hope, no comfort from himself. He saw himself, dust, returning to dust; therefore, no less than nine times, in this cxixth Psalm, does he call upon God to quicken him. "Quicken thou me according to thy word—quicken me in thy righteousness—quicken me after thy loving kindness—quicken me according to thy judgments—quicken me in thy way," &c. Why all this earnest importunity, and frequency of petition for quickening? O, says he, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." ver. 25. As a dying sinner, without a spark of hope, or a ray of comfort in myself, I want my heart to be raised, my spirits cheered, and my soul made joyful, and this only can come from the Lord my God. O quicken, cheer, revive, and refresh me, in thy way.

(2d.) "In thy way." What is God's way, in which he quickens and revives those who are dust, returning to dust? There is but one way. This is the only way. The way everlasting. Jesus says of himself, emphatically, "I am THE WAY." John xiv. 6. The one way of access to God the Father: the only way, through which every blessing and comfort comes from God the Father; and the only one way to the kingdom of God the Father. Are we dust, sinful dust in ourselves,

without hope? Do we know and believe Jesus to be *the Way*? Are we in Jesus, who is the Way, joined unto him, and become one spirit with him? 1 Cor. vi. 17. Why then, though sinful dust in ourselves, yet we are in a new and righteous state in Christ, justified from all sin, perfectly freed from all condemnation, and fully entitled to the kingdom of heaven and glory. For, we are really and truly in possession of God the Father's everlasting love, God the Son's finished salvation, and God the Holy Ghost's everlasting consolation. O what a blessed mercy, an unspeakable privilege, an inestimable blessing this! and this enjoyed by dust, returning to dust; here is the miracle of it!

But yet, though such is the happy state of every believer in CHRIST, still they find they want quickening from the LORD, that they may enjoy the sweet comfort, and rich experience of this from day to day in their hearts. Therefore they prize a throne of grace, and come boldly to a God of grace in Christ, to tell their heavenly Father, with the simplicity of children, what they are, dust, returning to dust, and pray him to cheer, revive, and comfort their souls by his Spirit, in believing views of what Christ is to them, has done for them, and what they are in him, as redeemed, justified, and saved. Thus, my dear brethren in Christ, and fellow-sinners in ourselves, we are to go on, sensible of our vileness and nothingness in ourselves, as dust; yet coming to Jesus, believing on him, hoping in him, and crying to him, from day to day, until we return to dust. And then (O most joyful consideration!) that blessed word shall be fulfilled, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. xv. 4, 9.

IMPROVEMENT.

Who then are men of wisdom, and who the sons of folly? The latter sleep in security, and indulge golden dreams of, "Soul, eat, drink, and be merry, for I have goods laid up for many years: death is at too great a distance to deserve thy thought. All is safe and secure now: all will be well for ever." But lo, they are suddenly roused by a loud voice, a peremptory demand, and a cutting reflection, "Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee." Thus, in the midst of their earthly enjoyments, in the height of their flattering hopes, and in the meridian of their vain happiness, they die fools, drop in the dark, disappear from the stage of life, and go to meet a God armed with vengeance, and incensed against them, for their sins, folly, and unbelief. Such is the wisdom of vain-glorious fools. They shall awake to everlasting confusion. But the men of wisdom see death approaching, and are prepared to meet him. They have fled for shelter, and found refuge in

Jesus, yea, victory over death. Are they dust? Must they return to dust? Jesus is their life. His righteousness their clothing. Their cleansing his blood. Their Sanctifier his Spirit. And his Father their Father. They go to live for ever with their Father God, their Saviour Jesus, their Sanctifier the Holy Ghost, whose ways they loved, whose Sabbaths they prized, whose ordinances they esteemed, and whose presence was their glory. "These shall go away into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46. Take then one word of

CAUTION

From the mouth of our Lord. "Beware of false prophets." Matt. vii. 15. And he gives this infallible rule to know them, "by their fruits." That is, the false doctrines they preach, and the corrupt lives they lead. Their doctrines only tend to exalt the pride of human nature, by teaching man's natural free-will to good, his moral rectitude and dignity, his power and ability to work out his own salvation, &c. in direct opposition to the sovereign grace of God, to the depreciating the work and salvation of the Son of God, and to the setting at naught the office and influence of the Spirit of God, in regenerating, quickening, and converting sinners, as plainly revealed in the scriptures. O, how do such false prophets abound! How are precious souls deceived, by their prophesying smooth things to them, whereby they are lulled asleep in strong confidence, false peace, and deceitful hope, while they are travelling the broad road that leadeth to destruction!

Beware, says our Lord, of such. O, but say many, it is uncharitable to think any who profess to be ministers of the Gospel, to be false prophets. This is false delicacy, both in respect to Christ, and your own souls. For in respect to Christ, if they teach contrary to him, and you hear, and do not beware of them, you prefer their doctrines to his, and in effect say, Christ is a false prophet, and you pour contempt upon his loving caution. In respect to your own souls, they are in danger of being poisoned, corrupted, and deceived by them, so as to perish eternally from the right way, which is Christ, and the truth as it is in him. Therefore, not to beware of false prophets, so as to abstain from hearing them, is certainly the most uncharitable thing you can be guilty of. For, our Lord asks, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" By which he suggests, that we have as much reason to expect sweet, nourishing, salutary, spiritual food from such, as we have to find grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles; and that it is folly in the extreme for men to expect it. Therefore, maintain not such charity at the expence of wisdom. Ever distinguish a wolf of prey, from a shepherd of souls. Learn charity from him, who taught and practised it to its utmost perfection. Attend to his

precepts. Follow his steps. Thus manifest that you are a disciple of him.

A COLLECT.

LORD, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldst visit him ! For sin has rendered us obnoxious to thy wrath, and brought upon us the sentence of death. Yet, glory to thee, O **LORD**, though sin has reigned unto death, yet grace reigns, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, unto eternal life. Son of **GOD**, make us free from sin and death. Grant us to live under thy spiritual reign, and to enjoy all the blessings and comforts of thy all-perfect and ever-glorious righteousness. O forgive our self-righteous pride, and self-confident hopes, that all our glorying may ever be, in the love of thee, O Father, the grace of thee, O Son, and the communion of thee, O Spirit, the one **GOD** whom we adore, now and ever. Amen.

The Forty-seventh Lord's Day.

ON BACKSLIDING.

I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction, they will seek me early. Hos. v. 15.

THE word backsliding is not once mentioned throughout the New Testament. Why so? Were there no backsliders under that glorious dispensation? Yes. Many, very many. And it is a crime of the highest aggravation too. But it is spoken of in different words, such as, "to fall away." Luke viii. 13. Heb. vi. 6. "To depart from the faith." 1 Tim. iv. 1. "To go back from Christ." John vi. 6. "Putting the hand to the plough, and looking back." Luke ix. 62. "Departing from the living God, and drawing back." Heb. iii. 12; and x. 39. If this be unto perdition, or final apostacy, it is most awful and most dreadful. "For it had been better for such, not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment given to them." 2 Pet. ii. 21.

Sensible what weak creatures we are, what sinful natures we have, what desperately wicked, and superlatively deceitful hearts we possess, what a world of temptations surrounds us, and what a subtle and powerful enemy fights against us, all this is enough to make us fear and tremble, and cry out, I shall surely one day perish by the power of some prevailing foe! No verily, not so. For if you really fear falling, you will dread the causes of it, and will be looking to the Lord, and crying to him, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Psalm xvii. 5. It is this humble, self-diffident sense of ourselves, sight of our danger, and dread of our falling, which excites prayer to the Lord, and brings down his almighty power to keep us from falling. In this way the Lord keeps his people "through faith unto eternal salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. In this sense, "Happy is the man who feareth the Lord always: but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief." Prov. xxviii. 14. Innumerable are the ways by which men harden their hearts against this godly, jealous fear of falling; and hence what dreadful mischiefs do professors fall into? O Lord, in mercy keep this fear alive in us, and teach us to be warned and profited by the harms of others. We hear of them too frequently, and forget them to soon.

While writing this, an awful account was given me o the

dreadful end of a neighbour, whom I have long known. He complained to his maid-servant of some distress of mind: advised her to read her Bible, for her name might be in the book of life, but his was not. That some years ago, when he followed the Gospel, and consorted with the people of God, he was happy, and wished himself among them now. Soon after, he went up stairs, and discharged a pistol at his head. The ball only slightly wounded his temple. His wife and maid hearing the report, immediately ran up. With his penknife in his hand, though held by his wife, he cut his throat in a most shocking manner, and expired instantly. I do not hear that this person was addicted to any outward sins, or that his circumstances in life were bad. Let us avoid all reflection upon him, and improve this shocking event to ourselves, by taking the Apostle's advice, "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. x. 12. It is awful to fall away, even though but from a profession of Christ! Here is a solemn warning for backsliders.

Our text holds forth to us the dealings of God with his own people, under offensive conduct towards him, and base backsliding from him. Here is,

(1st.) A threatening from the Lord.

(2d.) The cause for it.

(3d.) The gracious end to be effected by it.

O may the God of love enable us so to attend to each of these particulars, that our hearts may be humbled before him, and our souls get some spiritual profit from him, that we may be more and more established in the faith and love of him. Let us consider,

First. The threatening from the Lord. "I will go and return to my place." What is implied in this? It is spoken after the manner of men, when they turn away and go from any person or thing which displeases them. Just as Samuel turned about to go away from Saul, when he obeyed not the word of the Lord. 1 Sam. xv. 27. So the Lord turns away from his people, when displeased at their conduct. And he says, "I will return to my place." Do not from hence entertain an idea of a local Deity. For, "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Jer. xxiii. 24. What then can the Lord mean, by returning to his place? An experienced believer can easily answer this. For his heaven of happiness consists in the Lord's being sensibly nigh unto his soul, enjoying the smiles of his love, fellowship with him in spirit, and the witness of his Spirit to his heart, that he is a child of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. And it is his hell of misery, to find God departed from him. Hence David, in a frame of experienced dejection, from the distance of God, earnestly cries out, "Draw nigh to my

soul," Psal. lxxix. 18; "Be not thou far from me, O Lord." xxii. 19.

Therefore, by the Lord's threatening to return to his place, we are to understand that awful distance that sin has made between the Lord of heaven and us sinful worms of the earth. And not only so, but that those who have heretofore experienced the blessings and comforts of living near to God, and his living in them, walking in them, and comforting them by his Spirit, should find his divine presence withdrawn from them: so as with Job to complain, "O that I knew where to find him!" Job. xxiii. 3. Now you who are often questioning your state, here is a blessed criterion for you to judge of it by. Do you know what it is to enjoy the Lord's presence with you, and nearness to you? Is this the delight of your soul? Do you fear his frowns, and dread his withdrawing from you, and returning to that natural distance there is between him and you? If so, there is somewhat more wrought in you than all the powers of nature could effect. For verily your soul is alive to God. Let us consider,

Secondly. The cause of this threatening. It was offence against, and backsliding from the Lord. A gradual and voluntary turning from the knowledge, faith, love, profession and practice of God's truths, which were once solemnly avowed or attained. Many charges are brought against God's professing people in this chapter. They are all reduced to one in this verse. This God calls, their *offence*. What can this one single offence be? Verily, it is of such a nature, as includes all, and every evil in it. It is no other than the whoredom and adultery of the heart, in choosing some other object than the Lord, preferring it to him, seeking happiness in it, and forsaking him for it. This is the offence, the peculiar offence of professors. And the most daring offence it is. Look at the various objects which captivate the affections, attract the heart, and cause many to backslide from the Lord, his truths and worship, and say, is it not most base and treacherous?

For, though the Lord demands, "My son give me thy heart," Prov. xxiii. 26. Though the loving Saviour enjoins, "Abide in me," John xv. 4. Yet some cursed idol, having caught the eye, and bewitched the heart, the affections declare, I must enjoy this. O there are ten thousand charms in it! I must give up Christ for a little season. I cannot abide in close communion with him just now. But, after I have enjoyed the pleasing gratification of this object, then I will return to him again. The conduct and practice of many professors, loudly proclaim this, though they would be ashamed to speak thus plainly with their tongues. Poor souls! They did not mean at first totally to give up the Lord, or to give their hearts to their

idol, but only to lend it for a season, and then recal it back again. But alas! It happens to them, like persons who pledge their necessaries, to supply the present extravagance, with intent to redeem them again in future, but their property is lost, through want of ability. O, how many professors have thus betrayed their folly, and the Lord has awfully left them for a terror to others!

But to bring this matter home to our hearts' experience. Have we walked in close fellowship with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, in the comforts of the Holy Ghost? Have we been ready in exultation of heart to say with David? "I shall never be moved. LORD, by thy favour, thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." Psalm xxx. 6, 7. Perhaps, in a short season after, Satan, the world, and the flesh, combine to present some alluring object, dressed up Agag like, delicately, with every charm suited to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Like Eve you have looked at it: saw its fair appearance, reasoned upon it, and concluded there could be no harm in it. You inclined to it, and complied with it. But after the pleasing indulgence, what was the consequence? Verily, the flesh was gratified, God's spirit grieved, and your soul distressed. I have experienced the wormwoom and gall of this. It is of the Lord's mercy that I have not perished for this. I know one who walks very uncomfortably at this moment. What think you is the cause he assigns for it? O a very trifling one, in the sight of many professors! It was only complying with the request of some carnal friends, to go to the playhouse. He only went. He only lost his peace. He only mourns in distress. Will you ask, what harm is there in seeing a play? This person will tell you. Is this seeking the face of the Lord? Is this walking in the love of the Lord? Is this abiding in Christ? Is this of faith? If not it is sin. Is it not backsliding in heart and affection from the Lord? Hear the punishment of such. "He shall be filled with his own ways." Prov. xiv. 14. The LORD will return to his place, and leave him to his ways. He shall find the Lord's presence departed from him, and his peace forsaken him. And in the moments, when he wants to behold the glory of the Lord in his temple, the grace of the Lord in the sacred pages of his word, and the salvation of God in the face of his Son, what marvel, if he is so filled with his own ways, that the vain scenes of the playhouse present themselves to his view, and mock kings, queens, and emperors, with all the train of fiddlers, dancers, fops, fools and merry Andrews haunt his mind, and distress his soul? How long? even till "they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face, saith the LORD." Ever remember this, if you turn away from following the Lord, he will turn away from comforting

you. But, O what a mercy ! He will receive backsliders again who seek his face.

There is much implied in, "Seek my face !" The Lord's people who receive blessing from him, and righteousness from the God of salvation, is a generation that seek his face. Psalm xxiv. 6. And they cannot be happy without beholding the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. When they are not seeking this, they act contrary to their profession, hope, and comfort. They backslide from the Lord, their duty, and privilege. This will be the language of regenerate souls, "There be many that say, who will shew us any good ? LORD lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Ps. iv. 6. But the offence of the professors in the text was, they neglected thus to seek the Lord's face. They found other objects to seek pleasure in, and comfort from, beside the LORD. Therefore they neglected his sabbaths, ordinances, and the means of grace ; and turned from the Lord, and these, to their own idols of vanity and folly. But the Lord, notwithstanding the base and provoking behaviour of his people to him, has everlasting love for them, and rests in his love to them ; therefore has a gracious end in all his dealings with them. Thus we come

Thirdly, to consider, "In their affliction, they will seek me early." The Lord, the God of all their comfort and blessedness, had gone from them, and returned to his place ; because they had backsliden from him, and returned to their ways of sin, folly, and vanity. Though the Lord forsakes his people, as to his comforting presence, yet he never totally abandons them, entirely gives them up, and eternally casts them off. No, God the Father chose them. God the Son redeemed them. God the Spirit regenerated them. Therefore he will save them. And because they shall not be condemned, and perish with the world, they are judged and chastened of the Lord, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He afflicts them in love for their folly ; and thereby makes them so wise as to seek him early. O my friends, there is the Lord's love in the bitterest draught he administers. It may go against our stomachs, but it is profitable for our souls. It shall purge our disorders, and procure spiritual health. His medicines are salutary retaliations. We have followed our ways, to please the flesh. Now we must take the Lord's potions, which are bitter to the flesh. But, like bitters to the stomach, they shall provoke an appetite of soul towards the Lord.

"In their affliction." This seems to point at some one peculiar trouble. What is the real Christian's one trouble above all the rest ? The sense of an absent God, and this occasioned by his own folly. Verily, this soul-trouble is the greatest of all troubles to a gracious heart. O how many distresses ever

accompany it! All the graces of the spirit within fail; and the fruits of righteousness wither and fade. Faith grows weak, hope languid, love cold, peace departs, joy dies, duties become formal, and the soul sore distressed. The Spirit, who convinces of sin, after revoltings and backslidings, awakens to a sense of all this, and afflicts the soul that it may seek unto the LORD. And here is the manifest distinction between a real child of God, and a meer formal professor. They are both alike subject to backslide from their profession, and give awful evidence that they are sinners. The latter awfully falls away to rise no more. He gives up the TRUTH, that was sufficient to save him. He returns to the world, which effectually destroys him. "But he that is born of God, sinneth not, (unto death eternal) for the seed of God remaineth in him, that he cannot sin, because he is born of God." 1 John iii. 9.

How cannot sin? There is not any sin, but the seeds of it are in his flesh, or fallen nature, and he is as liable to commit sin, as any other sinner. But the seed of God, or the life of God in his soul, cannot possibly be destroyed. It is of an immortal nature, "because he is born of God." And, therefore, though that immortal seed, or divine life, which is communicated from Christ, by his word and Spirit, may in its actings and influences for a season, be injured and impaired by sin, as the health of the body is by various disorders, yet the new-born soul hath, by its union to Christ, everlasting life, and can never perish. Our natural sight may be impaired. We may contract deafness. Our taste may be vitiated. A numbness may seize our limbs. One or all of our faculties may be impaired. Yet we may see, hear, feel, taste, think and act, though we can perform none of these functions so perfectly, as if all were sound and well. Yet this is very different from the body's being dead, and all the senses extinct. So it may be with a new-born soul. "The soul of Gaius was in health and prospered." 3 John ii. The Psalmist complains of his soul being vexed, full of troubles, cast down, in prison, cleaving to the dust, melting with heaviness, fainting with distress, &c. Paul had buffetings of soul. Saints groan under the burdens of the flesh, and the body of sin. All this proves the life of the soul, and that it is subject to oppressions and disorders. But, however it may be injured and impaired by sin, yet its life cannot be destroyed, nor its spiritual faculties totally lost. Hence, in its worst and most languid state, it is not like those who are dead in trespasses and sins. For, it has eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to understand, faculties and dispositions to relish the spiritual truths of God's Word. Therefore, when the Lord calls, by the voice of affliction, Soul hear my voice.

it is I thy beloved, whom thou hast forsaken, and neglected to seek my face. Hear of thy folly. Feel thy miseries. Be warned of thy loss. See thy danger. Turn unto me. Seek my face. Thou canst not be happy without me. I will not be happy without thee. I am thy Lord: Thy FATHER, SAVIOUR, and SANCTIFIER. "Thou shalt seek me early." When the soul is thus called by the Lord, and returns to and seeks the Lord, it is because it was alive to the Lord, and heard the Lord's voice. Therefore, this is called, "renewing again to repentance." Heb. vi. 6. Whereby a change of mind, and a change of conduct are effected. Hence says the soul, "I will go and return to my first husband; why? for then it was better with me than now." Hos. ii. 7. Hear, O hear with wonder, adoration, joy and love, the gracious words which the LORD speaks to such! "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away." Hos. xiv. 4. Here is healing for their wounds. Love for their souls. And peace for their consciences. And what heightens the glory of all is, all is bestowed *freely*: given liberally from the loving heart, with the healing hand of a pacified God, who upbraideth not. Jam. i. 5. But though the Lord doth not, yet the returning sinner will upbraid himself. Though God loves him freely, he will hate his base folly heartily. Though God's anger is turned away from him, yet his will not be turned away from himself and his sins. Though his soul is healed by God's forgiving love, yet his heart will be broken in pieces before the Lord, in anguish of spirit against himself, and in tears of joy and praise of his pardoning God. One Word of

EXAMINATION.

How stands it between God and your souls? Do we or do we not enjoy his presence? A strange question to a carnal man! But it is what every spiritual man should daily put to himself. For "God's presence is salvation." Ps. lxxv. 5. Salvation from all sin, and from every guilty fear: while a heaven of holiness, peace, love and joy possess the soul. Many walk in uncomfortable darkness and uncertainty, respecting the state of their souls. Be assured, you are in a state of salvation, if you prize the Lord's presence, and dread his absence. And this will make you walk humbly before him, and fearful to offend him. Ever remember, our God is a jealous God.

(2d.) Is the Lord departed from us? Are we sensible of it? How do we behave under it? O what a loss, is the comforting presence of our God! Do we deplore it? Are we mourning in the bitterness of our soul for it? Are we waiting, looking, longing and crying to him to return? If so, verily, his grace is in our hearts, though his comfortable presence be withdrawn from

us. O bless his loving name, for his gracious dealings with such poor sinners as we are. For where his grace is, his presence shall surely be soon enjoyed. This is the breathing of gracious hearts. Is it yours? "In the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our souls is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." Isai. xxvi. 8. Is it so? Then what blessed assurance have we from his word, "The Lord is nigh unto all them who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth." Ever remember, "Jesus is THE TRUTH." Therefore we call upon GOD in Christ. For he is only nigh to us in Him. And, "He will fulfil the desire of them who fear Him. He will hear their cry and will save them." Psal. cxlv. 18, 19.

A COLLECT.

O GOD of our salvation, cause us to fear thy threatenings, as well as love thy promises. LORD make us watchful, and ever keep us jealous over our ways with a Godly jealousy. In thy presence is life and salvation. O make us prize it more and more. In thy absence is darkness and distress. Cause us more and more to dread it. Lord Jesus Christ be now and ever with our spirits, for the honour and glory of thy great name. Amen.

The Forty-eighth Lord's Day.

THE DUTY OF PRISONERS OF HOPE.

Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope. Zech. iii. 12.

THIS is a precious word, "ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15. "For they testify of me," saith our Lord. John v. 39. If so, then, O man of God, look for Christ in every text, that you may exercise your faith on him, and draw sweet consolation from him. This is our wisdom. Thus, we act like those who really are made wise unto salvation. Look for Christ in every text! Are there not many in the Old Testament, which seem to have no reference at all to Christ? Where? not one. For Christ is God. "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." John i. 3. "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power." Heb. i. 3. Is there any text then but what refers to this God? Again, all men are sinners. Do not the Scriptures constantly testify of deliverance, redemption, and salvation to the people of God? Who but Christ is the deliverer, redeemer, and Saviour of sinners? Doth he not testify again and again? "I, even I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour." Isai. lxiii. 11. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." lxv. 22. Therefore, whenever the Lord's people were in any distress, trouble, and calamity, the prophets always took care to exalt the great God and our Saviour in their deliverance; and to speak clearly and plainly of his being made manifest in the flesh. Thus the minds of the people of old were comforted, their hearts encouraged, and their hopes kept up, by believing the love the Lord had for them, and the relation he stood in to them, as testified of in the Scriptures. Just so it is with us at this day.

But then, why do we not always thus comfortably view Christ, as testified of in all Scriptures? *Calista*, an infamous strumpet, thus tauntingly bragged against *Socrates*, "all thy philosophy cannot alienate one of my lovers from me, but my beauty can fetch many of thy scholars from thee." To this he replied, "No wonder, for thou temptest men to the pleasing path of perdition, but I persuade them to the troublesome way of virtue." Now just so it is with us. Our flesh, that vile strumpet, with all its corrupt notions, carnal reasonings, and lofty imagi-

nations, these, as so many pleasing charms, *Calista* like, draw away our minds and affections from seeing and contemplating Christ in the Scriptures, in whom every virtue centers, and shines forth with undiminished lustre of perfection and glory. From hence we may raise this doctrine, that though Christ is most clearly and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, as every way suited to our state, and to bring relief and comfort to our hearts as sinners; yet such is the stupidity and blindness of our natures, that we cannot see, know, love, nor rejoice in him, unless the Holy Spirit, the glorifier of Christ, takes the vail from our hearts, and takes of the things of Christ, and shews them unto us, so as to engage our hearts and affections unto him. Therefore, we should never take up our bible without looking to the Spirit to enlighten our minds, that we may see the love and glory of Christ shining in it. O that he may be pleased at this time to help us to consider the words before us, so as to see Christ in them to our soul's comfort and joy. We have here

(1st.) Christ set before us as a strong hold.

(2d.) To whom!

(3d.) An exhortation or command.

Let us meditate on what is implied in each of these.

First. Christ set before us as a strong hold. But are we sure that the Prophet here speaks of Christ? Positively so; and of no other. For the Spirit THE COMFORTER, by the Prophet, gives us such a minute description of him, and what has been most exactly fulfilled by him, that it is impossible to mistake here. For he thus calls upon us sinners, "Rejoice greatly, and shout." Why? "Behold thy king cometh unto thee." Here is (1st.) Christ's regal power, by which he was to conquer all our enemies for us, to subdue them in us, rule over us by his grace, and reign in us by his love, and so of rebels make us the happy, joyful subjects of his kingdom. O this is a blessed coming of Christ unto us! (2d.) "He is just." What! to take vengeance on us for our sins? O no! But, blessed be his precious name, though, as the just God, he hates our sins, yet he is the just Saviour also, who loved our souls from everlasting. Therefore he undertook in the everlasting covenant to be our just surety, our righteous advocate; and now he comes to fulfil all his covenant engagements. To redeem us at the hands of justice. To discharge every debt, due, and demand, and to fulfil all righteousness for us. And as he is righteous himself, so he will present all his people righteous, in his own perfectly glorious righteousness before his Father, that God may be just, while he justifieth the ungodly, unrighteous sinner who believeth in Jesus. Rom. iii. 26. Such is the just character of Christ. Therefore (3d.) He cometh,

“having salvation.” The salvation of all his beloved people at heart, which work he never left, till with his expiring breath, in shame and agony on the cross, he cried, *it is finished*. Therefore he only is our salvation. Hence he saith, “Behold, thy salvation cometh.” Isai. lxii. 11. Mistake not here, Christ is both our Saviour and our salvation also. Many err here, not knowing the Scriptures, nor considering the work of Christ. For he came to work out salvation for us: to be salvation to us: to bestow his salvation upon us. The work of his Holy Spirit in us, is to testify and bear witness to the finished salvation of Christ, to convince us of our want of it, to persuade our minds to believe in, and our hearts to receive Christ, as our salvation; to rejoice in him alone, and to look to no other but him; desiring ever to be found in him, in his atonement, righteousness, and salvation. It is by the faith of this, that the life of God, the love of God, is promoted, and the hatred of sin, and the death of our sins, is effected in our souls, from day to day. For this is the joy and triumph of our faith. “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation.” Isai. xii. 2. O what language is here! How happy does this make the heart of a poor sinner! Nothing but this can. Thus Christ cometh unto us, having salvation. And, says the prophet, (4th.) He cometh unto us, “lowly, riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” Observe how minutely exact the Holy Ghost is here, when he inspired this prophet to foretel of our Lord’s coming. This was literally fulfilled, when Christ made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Matt. xxi. What a sight was here for profane wits, and infidel hearts to ridicule! O how many such might say of the meek and lowly Jesus, “There, yonder is he who pretends to be the Son of God, and Saviour of the world! See him riding upon the most contemptible of all animals, an asses colt. Behold, what an enthusiastic rabble he has got about him! What a mighty ado they make with him! “While the contemptuous sneer issues in a burst of laughter.” But, says the Holy Ghost, “rejoice greatly and shout.” O my fellow sinners, and thou, O my soul, under all this poverty, meanness, and contempt, see the glory of our God and our KING; and that it was his glory thus graciously to humble himself for us, and thus lowly to come unto us! If so, the Holy Ghost has shewn us the majesty and glory of the most high God, displayed in the grace of the most humble man: and therefore we have cause to rejoice greatly, and to shout constantly. For, here we behold the very strong hold mentioned in the text.

What is meant by a strong hold? A strong tower, a place of

defence, a sure and safe refuge, where persons may trust their lives, family, and fortune, and their all with the greatest security. Now all this Christ is to the soul, as an almighty King, a just God, a complete Saviour, and a lowly and perfect MAN. All these enter into the being and essence of this strong hold. Each and every one of them is delightful to contemplate. We would not part with either of them. O that we dwelt more upon them, that we might find more comfort in them. The last of them sweetens all the rest, even to see our Almighty King, our just God, our complete Saviour, a perfect MAN, in all things, except sin, like unto ourselves. How does this endear him to our hearts, and make him precious to our souls? For, we can go with humble familiarity to him, as our brother in flesh, pour out our sorrows before him, tell him of our sins and temptations, our enemies and dangers, our doubts and fears, and trust our souls and all our concerns with him: For we are prisoners of hope. What is implied in this, we come,

Secondly, to consider. In the verse preceding the text, God the Father speaks to his Church, "As for thee, by the blood of the covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water." That is, out of their natural state, and from all its wrath and curse, where there was not one drop of water to refresh them. He translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son. Then they find themselves prisoners of hope. How! God's children, believers in Christ, and subjects of his kingdom, prisoners of hope? Are they not the Lord's free men? Has not Christ made them free from the dominion of sin, the bondage of the law, the tyranny of Satan, the terrors of death and hell, and brought them into his glorious liberty? Glory unto him, he has. But still, we are prisoners for all that. Do not you feel yourself a prisoner from day to day? Is not your new-born soul imprisoned in the body? Yea, in such a body as hath got the infection of the gaol distemper too; sin, which makes it a vile body, a body of sin and death? Do not you feel that the chains of sin, the shackles of unbelief, and the fetters of lusts and corruptions, hang heavy upon you? Do not these fret and gall you? Do you not groan under these? Do they not pinion you down, as it were, to the floor of your prison, so that your soul cannot, as it otherwise would, soar into the regions of light, love, liberty, holiness and joy? Holy Paul was in the very same prison as you are. This was his bitter exclamation in it, "O wretched man that I am!" But he sweetly chants this jubilee note also, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vii. 25. Though he was a prisoner, yet a prisoner of hope. Christ was his strong hold. To him he looks. In him he triumphs. For him he gives thanks. This is the work of prisoners of hope. This should be their constant employ.

For they should ever be turning to Jesus their strong hold, and rejoicing in him. Thus we come

Thirdly, to consider. What is implied in these words, Turn ye to the strong hold? (1st.) Remember who commands this. The prophet **Zachariah**. True. But "we know, he spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 21; therefore this is the command, not of man but of the **LORD**, the **COMFORTER**. And a most precious word of comfort it is to prisoners of hope. O let us bless the Lord for it, and obey his command in it. For

(2d.) It implies weakness, dangers, and enemies. What say ye, ye prisoners of hope? Are ye not daily surrounded with these, within and without? Do ye dread these? Do ye fear falling by them, and being overcome of them? Ye need not one moment. Turn ye to the strong hold: Even to the **MAN** of **GOD**'s right hand, the **SON** of **MAN**, whom he hath made strong for himself." Psalm lxxx. 17. Though we are all weakness in ourselves, though exposed to the strongest lusts, the most powerful temptations, Satan, a most potent enemy, the world that dreadful foe, with all its inviting charms, bewitching snares, soothing promises, and terrifying threatenings, yet in our blessed strong hold, in our precious Christ, we have safety against all, security from all, and victory over all. In this strong hold this joyful song is ever sung, "Salvation God hath appointed for walls and bulwarks." Isai. xxvi. 1. "We are more than conquerors, through him who loved us." Rom. viii. 37. O then, under every distress, and in every danger, turn to this **Man** of **GOD**, this **GOD-MAN**. A **Man** to receive you. A **GOD** to protect you. O ye prisoners of hope, there is a precious mystery in **GOD** making the **Son** of **Man** strong for himself, and of his being the **Man** of **GOD**'s right hand! Our souls suffer much distress, and lose much comfort, for want of clearly seeing, and constantly attending to this point. The **Son** of **GOD** in our nature, having obtained a complete victory over all our enemies, is the glorious strong hold of a sinner's heart. And, that he ever lives in our nature to receive us, and bestow his victories upon us, this is the triumph of our souls. O let us ever turn to this strong **Son** of **Man**, to this **Man** of **GOD**'s right hand, by whom **GOD** does all for us, from whom he bestows all blessings upon us, and through whom he gets all glory from us. For,

(3d.) This command implies necessities and wants in ourselves, full supply for all our need, and rich provision for all our wants. For it pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell in this **Son** of **Man**, this **Man** of his right hand. Col. i. 19. And that we should receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace, John i. 16. That is one favour upon another. There is an inex-

haustible fulness in Christ our strong hold. It pleased the Father that it should be so, and it is the pleasure of the loving Spirit to reveal it to us, and direct us poor needy creatures, to turn to him, to receive out of his fulness. And, our precious Saviour constantly proclaims, "Ho, every one who feels his misery, knows his wants, and is sensible of his need, come and buy, a rich supply for all, without money, and without price, without the least merit, desert, or worthiness. Turn to me constantly, receive of me freely, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isai. lv. 1. Why, then, O ye prisoners of hope; are ye at any time complaining under wants and necessities? Whose fault but your own, in not turning to our precious strong hold? If ye turn from him, is it not to lying vanities, and to pursue empty trifles, while your souls are starving amidst such rich provision? Shame on us. Yea, shame and confusion will be the attendants of such egregious folly. For

(4th.) This turning implies the disposition of the heart and affections. We are often doubting and questioning, whether we have an interest in the love of God, and the salvation of Christ. I am verily persuaded, we cannot possibly have a better evidence of this, than that as poor, miserable sinners, and needy creatures, the desires of our souls are unto Christ, and to the remembrance of his name; and that we turn unto him, seek all our comfort from him, expect all our happiness in him, and look for every supply out of his fulness. For, thus we honour Christ, have the mind of God the Father, and obey the will of God the Holy Ghost. What he testifies of Christ, what he exhorts us to in his Word, our hearts are suitably affected with and disposed to. This strongly evinceth, that the Word rightly influences us, and that the power of the Spirit is come upon us. O ye prisoners of hope, see your peculiar mercy, and be thankful. Consider your special, distinguished privilege, and be joyful. Ever turn to Jesus your strong hold, and be triumphantly happy. For,

Lastly, turning to him, implies aversion to, and turning from every thing which stands in competition with him. Here a very large field opens, and innumerable objects present themselves, which would lead us beyond the bounds of our meditation to attend to. Two only shall suffice, and these will include all the rest. And these also are natural to us all. They are, **SIN** and **SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**. By the former we satisfy our beastly lusts: by the latter we gratify our devilish pride. By turning to Christ, we turn from both, and find infinitely greater delight in him, than all the sensuality and pride of the others can possibly yield us: yea, we find his love, and that creates heaven in our souls: His righteousness that creates glorying in our hearts. For in that we appear righteous before ou

heavenly Father, and have a just title to his kingdom. By sin, understand every thing which is contrary to, and hinders our enjoying the love of Christ in our hearts. Judge of all things by this rule, and you will not be asking, what harm in this game, and the other diversion? But, is it of faith? If not it is sin. Can it be pursued in love? If not it is an evil. Turn to Christ in faith, and you will turn from all that is contrary to him in love. By self-righteousness, understand every thing which puffs you up with a good opinion of yourself, and makes you think any better of yourself than a poor, wretched, miserable sinner, without hope in yourself, or confidence in your own works and doings. Living under this view, you will daily see your want of this precious strong hold, your constant need of turning to it, and experience the blessedness, comfort, and joy found in it. This is the view, this the faith, this the prayer of living saints, who are poor, dying sinners. "Be thou (O Jesus) my strong habitation, whereinto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me, for thou art my rock and my fortress." Psalm lxxi. 3.

A COLLECT.

ALMIGHTY SAVIOUR, thou knowest that we are nothing but sin, weakness, poverty and wretchedness. O make us to know and feel this constantly, that we may flee to thee continually as our strong hold, and dwell in thee as our precious habitation. Glory be to thee, that by natural images, thou dost propose thyself to us, display thy love for us, invite us to thyself, and assure us of safety and salvation in thee. Lord, forgive our backwardness to come to thee. Draw us, dear Lord, to thyself. Grant that living and dying we may be found in thee, to the glory of the Father's love, thy grace, and the Spirit's power. Amen.

The Forty-ninth Lord's Day.

ON NEGLECTING SALVATION.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?
Heb. ii. 3.

A MINISTER of the Gospel thus began an address from the pulpit to his hearers. "My brethren, I have a very solemn question to propose to you this day. It is a question of the greatest importance. And it is of such a nature, that neither you nor I can answer it: no nor all the men on earth. Nay, Satan, with all his knowledge, cannot answer it. No Saint in heaven, nor can the highest archangel, nay, the great God himself cannot answer it. The question is this; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation? May the Lord, for his mercies sake, impress our minds with a deep sense of its eternal importance! May he enable us to consider it with the utmost attention. Yea, as though our souls were this moment going to take their flight from the body, and to appear before the presence of God, may we now meditate upon this solemn question. O that we might live every day, and perform every duty, under the influence of it: ever remembering that it is proposed to us, by God the Holy Ghost. Let us consider,

The nature of this Salvation.

The comfort and blessedness of receiving it.

The awfulness and misery of neglecting it.

First. To impress our minds with a deep sense of its blessed nature, and vast importance to us, it is called "So great Salvation." So inexpressibly great: so inconceivably glorious is this Salvation, that, compared with it, time, with all its exhibitions, the whole world, with all its grandeur, glory, and enjoyments, are but empty shadows, and trifling vanities. For this Salvation is great in its Author, Jehovah, the great God in all his Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Each of these great and glorious Persons, are equally and alike concerned and engaged in this great Salvation. It was the plan of their infinite wisdom, resulting from their great love to sinners. "For God, (the whole Godhead) is rich in mercy, according to his great love, wherewith he loved us." Ephes. ii. 4. Rich mercy to sinners flows from God's great love for them. Therefore, great love, big with rich mercy, procures a great salvation for them. So that the great love of the great God is the origin of this great salvation.

(2d.) It was entirely wrought out, and perfectly finished by the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, according to all the types and figures, predictions and prophecies concerning him, "He was to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness." Dan. ix: 24. All this he hath for ever effected and sealed, by his blood-shedding and death upon the cross. Hence he is not only the Saviour of sinners, but salvation itself to sinners. All salvation is in him, and no other. And we are saved in him, with an everlasting salvation. It is so perfectly great, and so infinitely complete, that nothing need, nor can possibly be added to it. So that if a believing sinner be asked, where is your salvation? He will reply in great simplicity, It is all in Jesus. He is my salvation. And a great, precious, and glorious salvation he is. But how does he know this? Because

(3d.) It is as plainly, and as clearly revealed in the Word of the Gospel, as though wrote with a sun-beam. And by the means of the Gospel of Christ, the Holy Spirit makes it manifest that it is a great salvation to the hearts of sinners; and they highly value, and greatly esteem it as such. Is any poor sinner puzzled in his mind to know whether he is a partaker of the Spirit of Christ or not? Here is one certain, sure, and plain rule to judge by. Have you the mind of the Spirit? Do you see the salvation of Christ to be a great one? Is the work of Christ in his holy life, and sin-atonement death, glorious in your eyes and delightful to your soul? Can you say of it, it is all my salvation and all my desire? If so, you certainly partake of the Spirit of Christ, whose work and office in the œconomy of salvation, is to honour the Gospel of Christ, and to glorify Jesus as the only Saviour of sinners. For

(4th.) It is so great a salvation, that it extends to the ends of the earth, includes sinners, great sinners, the vilest of sinners, the chiefest of sinners: all sorts of sinners: sinners dead in trespasses and sins, enemies to Christ, haters of God, enemies of him, blasphemers of his name, in open arms against his power, stout-hearted rebels against his crown and government. In short, there is no sinner out of hell, be his state ever so bad, and his circumstances ever so desperate, but this great salvation is suited to him, sufficient to relieve him, and eternally glorify him. O well may we sing,

Salvation, O the joyful sound!

What pleasure to our ears:

A sov'reign balm for every wound,

A cordial for our fears.

Thus we see somewhat of this great salvation. That it is all

in Jesus ; and that he is this salvation itself. Therefore it does not consist in an outward reformation of life, performing religious duties, making a profession of Christ, joining a church of Christ, and becoming very orthodox in our heads. But it is receiving and partaking of this great salvation, in our hearts and consciences, so as to enjoy all the rich privileges, saving graces, and sanctifying influences of it.

Secondly. Consider the blessedness and comfort of this. Here observe, it is impossible for us to do any thing to get an interest in this great salvation. Great and gracious men, have spoken very unadvisedly with their lips, and wrote very incautiously with their pens, when they have exhorted poor sinners to get an interest in this great salvation. What would they have them do? What work set about? What good thing perform, to procure this same interest? Alas! They might as well bid them quicken their own souls, and then go to Christ for life: or save themselves, and then go to Christ for an interest in his salvation. O how does this depreciate the free grace and love of God! How does it degrade the work and salvation of the Son of God! How supercede the office and operations of the Spirit of God! And how on one hand puff up the pride of self-righteous hearts of some, and on the other, perplex and distress poor sinners' souls!

Blessed be God, no such a hard term, no such impossible condition is required of us to perform. Seek we may, seek we shall, use every means we ought, and we shall, to obtain the comfort and blessedness of this great salvation, if we see its suitableness, and know our want of it. It is but to know it, and we shall seek to enjoy it. Believe it, and possess it. Receive it, and experience the comfort of it. For we enjoy it, in receiving Christ, believing on him, and coming to him. The way is open. The access easy. Every sinner that will, may enjoy the comfort and blessedness of this great salvation. There are no hindrances, no objection on Christ's part, for he says, "Come unto me," Matt. xi. 28. "And him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37. "Whosoever WILL, let him take of the waters of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17. "Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. For EVERY ONE who asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to every one who knocketh it shall be opened." Matt. vii. 7, 8. Yea, our dear Saviour's soul so hungers and thirsts after precious souls, that, like a Herald, he proclaims and invites thus, "Ho EVERY ONE that thirsteth, (for salvation) come, and he that hath no money, (neither worth nor worthiness about him) come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy this salvation without money, feed upon the blessings of it, and enjoy all its comforts, without price." Isai. lv. 1.

Now consider all these sweet invitations, and precious promises, from Jesus, our salvation, and say, are they not free and full? dare you doubt the sincerity of his heart, or the truth of his word? though it is impossible for God our Saviour to lie, yet it is not impossible for you to make him a liar, in and to yourself. For, by not going to him, receiving him, or believing him, you plainly question his word and doubt his sincerity. And therefore, you are a distressed sinner: you do not enjoy the comforts of this great salvation. That unbelief which makes God a liar, keeps you from entering into the love of Christ, and enjoying his salvation. For all the comforts and blessedness of this great salvation, is enjoyed in believing. For the Apostle says, "We who have believed (the Gospel of Christ, and in Christ revealed in the Gospel) do enter into rest." Our souls find rest in Jesus, satisfaction of mind in his work, and joy of soul, in his salvation. We have the peace of God in our consciences, and the joy of the Holy Ghost in our hearts. We find sin subdued in us, the world overcome, and death and hell conquered for us, and an abundant entrance into heaven opened to us.

What then? Are we to sit down in carnal sloth, and indulge supine indolence? No. For he exhorts, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." Heb. iv. 11. Let us? Who? What! Believers, who have already entered into rest, found and enjoy rest, and yet labour to enter into rest? How is this? Suppose your mind was set upon seeing *Paris*, and enjoying all the pleasures and delights of that superb court and city, if when you landed at *Calais*, and were told, you are now in *France*, would that satisfy you? Would you not travel on till you arrived at the city and court? When you had seen some of its grandeur and gaities, would you not say, this does not satisfy me? For I have heard, and believe there is much more to be seen and enjoyed. Therefore faith would stimulate you to labour to see, and enjoy all that you have heard of, and believe to be worthy your attention. But more especially if you saw the King, and he gave you free liberty to come to court, and be ever near his Royal Person, how would this excite your desires day after day? Just so it is by the comfort and blessedness of this salvation. The more we see of its glory, the more we want to enjoy of it. The more we do enjoy, still our wants, desires and affections for it are increased. Are we babes in Christ? We want to be young men. Are we young men? We want to be fathers. Are we fathers? We want to be gone from earth, and long to be with Christ, to enjoy him, and this great salvation in all its fulness in eternal glory. So that we are still labouring, even in the enjoyment of rest. If like Paul, Christ

has apprehended us, and we have found his preciousness, tasted his sweetness, and experienced his salvation, we shall be following on, pressing after, to apprehend him, and attain to the mark of the prize of our high calling in Christ, crying every step—That I may win Christ—that I may know him—that I may be found in him. O, it is comfort and joy to dwell on this! But infinitely more so, to experience and enjoy this. But we must turn from this delightful subject to a gloomy scene, and consider,

Thirdly, The awfulness and misery of neglecting this great salvation. Here is the solemn question, "How shall we escape?" What? The antithesis or opposite to so great salvation, even so great damnation. For, if the former be neglected, the latter cannot be escaped. But what is it to neglect this salvation? To slight, disregard, and pour contempt upon it. And this is done, because men prefer other things to it. For our Lord's word will ever stand true, "He that loveth any thing more than me, is not worthy of me." Matt. x. 37. Such make light of the Gospel of God's grace, the salvation of his Son, and the comforts of his Spirit. O, beware of excuses for neglecting the Gospel of Salvation. For, however important they may seem now, they will all be found vain and trifling another day.

For God hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son. He is the only Saviour. He who refuses to hear him, slights his love, pours contempt upon his work of salvation, and heaps up unto himself wrath, against the great day of wrath. It is not men's saying, I have married a wife—I have bought ground—I have purchased oxen—I am so busied, taken up and encumbered with the affairs of life, that I have no time nor leisure to think of the Gospel, Salvation, and eternal things, that will excuse them. No, says the Lord, "None of those who are bidden, shall taste of my supper." Luke xiv. 24. Those who have refused to taste of the Lord's feast of grace and salvation on earth, shall be banished his presence in heaven, and hear that awful doom, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 41.

Who will pronounce this most solemn, most dreadful sentence? None other than the meek LAMB of God. Even he who hung naked, and exposed to shame, on the accursed tree, without the gates of Jerusalem; who laid down his life, shed his precious blood, and expired in inconceivable anguish, to work out redemption, bring in an everlasting righteousness, and finish salvation for lost sinners. This once despised, slighted, set at naught Saviour, who now tenderly invites, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28. Yea, who now most affectionately expostulates, "Come now, and let us reason together, though your

sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isai. i. 18. For my blood cleanseth from ALL SIN. 1 John i. 7. O, ye boasted sons of reason, why, O why will ye refuse to hear the voice of this heavenly charmer? why reject his blessed, comfortable reasoning? why trample on his precious blood, and neglect his great salvation? See Jesus, whom you have set before you in the Gospel, full of grace, mercy and truth. See him you shall. For you must stand before the SON OF MAN. He shall come again in his glory. You must appear before him. No excuses will avail now. You loved the world better than Christ. That, and all things in it, are now burnt up. You preferred your sins to Christ. You have enjoyed them, lived and died in them. Now you possess them. You have heard the Gospel of Christ you slighted it; the salvation of Christ, you neglected it. You will now hear no more of this for ever. Think, O think of this, and say, How can you, how will you escape the damnation of hell; ye who have slighted precious Christ, disregarded his glorious Gospel, and neglected his great salvation? Gospel professors hear, fear, and tremble, lest this should prove the awful case with any of you; to hear the once loving Saviour, but then tremendous judge pronounce, "Depart, I know you not. Lord Jesus save the soul that writes, and him who reads, or hears, from this dreadful doom. One Word of

EXAMINATION.

Is Christ precious, his salvation glorious, the Bible estimable, sin hateful, and yourself abhorred in your own sight? Are you crying to Jesus? Lord save me, or I perish. Do you desire to be saved from your sins, and to partake of his holiness; that you may enjoy holy communion with him on earth, as well as to be glorified with him in heaven? O give glory to him, and rejoice in him, for verily his great salvation is come to you, and will exalt you into his eternal presence and glory. Hold it fast in your conscience. Press on in your life. Sing the grace and glory of Jesus every step, till you get to heaven.

A COLLECT.

O GOD, who aboundest in mercy to miserable sinners, and out of thy free love hast provided and revealed a great salvation for us in Christ Jesus. O, do thou impress our hearts with thy mercy and thy love, and suffer us not to neglect this thy salvation. Lord make us daily sensible of our want of it, so that we may come humbly to thee, O Saviour, to receive the blessings, and enjoy the comforts of it at thy hands, as thy free gifts; so that being saved by thee, and living upon thee, we may walk worthy of thee, and give glory and praise to thee, now and for ever. Amen.

The Fiftieth Lord's Day.

ON SPIRITUAL WORSHIPPERS.

The hour cometh and now is, when the true Worshippers shall worship the Father, in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. John iv. 23.

SUCH as is the spirit and temper of our minds, which we live and die in, so will our eternal state be. If we are made spiritual here, we are fit for heaven, and shall reign in glory for ever. If we live and die, just as we were born, natural creatures, we are no more capable of worshipping God on earth, and enjoying him in heaven, than a beast or a devil. God's Word shall stand. Every lie against it shall be banished to the bottomless pit, from whence it sprang. The great Teacher sent from God, yea the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, here presents us with a most gracious truth, and a most joyful doctrine, which furnisheth these two points for our meditation.

(1st.) Why do any of the apostate sons of Adam, become the true worshippers of God? And,

(2d.) The nature of this worship.

Here is both the grace and glory of the Gospel displayed. O may the Lord lead our hearts into a clear understanding, and blessed experience of these truths, while we are meditating upon them.

First. Why do any of the apostate sons of Adam become the true worshippers of God? Are we naturally so? No, not one of us. I can speak from experience. Having passed through more than thirty years, in great sobriety and decency of life, kept up a form of godliness from my early age, constantly attended Church and Sacrament; but yet alas! I had the form and no more. I was a stranger to the life and power of the spirit and truth of the Gospel. But we have a more sure Word of testimony, than the experience of any sinner upon earth. We cannot spiritually worship God till we know him. But we are naturally ignorant of the true God. "For the world by wisdom (all mankind by all their natural wisdom and acquired knowledge) know not God. But it pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching (to make known his true character in Jesus) to save them who believe." 1 Cor. i. 21. Save them from what? Their natural ignorance, blindness, and stupidity, in being under the reign and rule of the prince of the power

of the air, and in worshipping the trinity of idols which he hath set up, in opposition to the true **GOD**, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. As the people of old said of the molten calf, so it may be justly said to each of us, These are thy gods, O man, O woman. Exodus xxxii. 12. Every one of us naturally bow down to these, set our hearts upon, and seek all our comfort and happiness in and from these. How long? Even till we go down to the grave, with a deceived heart, and a lie in our right hand— or, till the Lord in mercy prevents this, by seeking us. For, says our Lord, “the Father seeketh such to worship him.” In these words, the following points are as clearly held forth to us, as that light flows from the sun. (1st.) That naturally we have not the least aptitude, or disposition to seek the Lord, and to worship him in spirit and in truth. For this is the language of all our hearts to God, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” Job xxi. 14, 15. Our neck is as an iron sinew, that we cannot bow before him. Our carnal mind is at enmity against him, that we will not submit to him. Our brow is as brass. We have a whore’s forehead, and are not ashamed before him. Such we are, and such he finds us, when he seeks us. But,

(2dly.) Why does **GOD** seek us? Do not look into yourselves. You will not find the least goodness to excite this. We often read in Scripture of the **LORD**’s doing great things for his people, and declaring that he doth them for his **NAME**’s SAKE. And we find his people praying and pleading for blessings, for his **NAME**’s SAKE. What are we to understand by this? Verily, that the **LORD**, in covenant, hath assumed such names, as **FATHER**, **SAVIOUR**, **SANCTIFIER**, which are expressive of his love for them, and relation to them; and that he hereby engages himself to be that to them, and do those things for them, which are implied in these names. Hence, in the text, Christ does not use the term **GOD** or **LORD**, but **FATHER**. The *Father* seeketh—such worship the *Father*. O my fellow sinners, how precious is this! How amazing that the most high **GOD** should, in covenant mercy from all eternity, take upon himself this endearing appellation of **FATHER**; and have the eye of a loving Father over the heart of an affectionate Father for, and the love of the most tender Father to us apostate creatures, stout-hearted rebels as we all are against him! This is the joyful cause why he seeks us.

(3dly.) How does he seek us? The word *seeketh* in the text, is very emphatical. It signifies to seek with the most intense labour, the greatest pains, and the most unwearied diligence: so as not to intermit, till what is sought for is found. In the

most striking manner our Lord represents this to us, by the parables of the lost sheep, and the lost piece of money. With what ardour does the man seek his lost sheep in the wilderness? With what diligence does the woman seek her lost piece of silver? How do each of these rejoice at finding what was lost? Luke xv. Ah! But there is somewhat peculiar here! It was the man's own sheep. It was the woman's own money. They each had a right and property in what was lost. And what was lost would never seek them, if they had not sought that. O, let these images sink us into deepest humility, and excite highest love to the Lord for seeking us. Would the lost sheep ever seek after its shepherd, and find him? Could the lost money seek its owner, and come to her? Just as soon should we ever seek the Lord, come to, own and worship him, if he had not sought us. But our Lord has distinct knowledge of us, everlasting love to us, and special propriety in us; therefore, as a FATHER he seeks us.

But how? By his beloved Son, the Son of Man. He came to seek, and to save, that which was lost. Matt. xviii. 11. A striking instance we have before us, in this chapter, John iv. Here our dear Lord is represented in this happy element, obeying his Father's will, and doing his blessed work. He had turned his back upon the proud, self-righteous Pharisees. His face was towards, and his heart going after, one of his beloved perishing ones. Therefore, he must needs go through Samaria. Ver. 4. There was a natural reason, and a moral necessity for it. For, here was one of his lost sheep, which he came to seek and save. Therefore he must find it. He came to Jacob's well, weary and thirsty. Ver. 6. A full proof this, that he was *perfect man*; in all things like unto us, but without sin. Though he was weary *in*, he was not weary *of* his work, of ministering life to the dead, and salvation to the lost.

The Saviour goes first: then comes the vile sinner, to the well. He must needs go: she must needs come, according to settled purposes of the everlasting covenant of love and grace. The hour was fixed; six o'clock in the evening. This was to be her time of love: the appointed hour of her conversion: the stated period for her to find Jesus. As he says, "I was found of them who sought me not; I was made manifest unto them who asked not after me." Isai. lxxv. 1. Just so it is with every lost sinner. The shepherd first seeks the lost sheep, to restore it to the flock. The Saviour first seeks the dead sinner, to quicken him unto God. The woman came to the well, only to draw water, without the least thought or design of finding the Messiah. But he had a design of love to her precious soul; therefore, in his providence, he brought her there at that very instant. All might appear human chance and con-

tingency to her; but to Christ, all was under his fixed purpose and determined appointment. Necessity pleads, and he asks this favour, Give me to drink, ver. 7. Stop here one moment and reflect. This request opens the most free, large, and unreserved conversation between—whom? O, wonderful to think of! The great God our Saviour, and a woman of a mean and ordinary station in life; yea more, a woman of a profligate and abandoned character, an adulteress, a whore. Yet, notwithstanding all this, Jesus fully opens to her the mysteries of his kingdom, the freeness of his grace, and manifests his eternal Godhead, by telling her of her past life, and the particular sin she now lived in, “Thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband,” ver. 18; and he converted her soul to believe in him, and to make this invitation to, and confession of him, “Come, see a man (the most wonderful of all the sons of men) who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” Ver. 29. As though she had said, None but the Christ, the Son of God, could tell me such things as he has, but as he has told me these things, therefore without doubt he must be that omniscient God, who searcheth the heart, and knows all things in us, and done by us.

Now here we see a true picture of the Father’s seeking us, perishing, lost, yet self-confident, self-righteous sinners, before we have one single thought of him, one pious motion towards him, one good desire after him, or the least inclination to forsake our sins and worship him. Yes. He prevents all this by his love. He is beforehand with us in his grace. He reveals and manifests himself and his salvation to us, while we are in a state of sin, under wrath, and deserving hell. Thus he acts like himself, with the love of a precious Saviour, the affections of a loving Father, and with the sovereignty of an almighty Sanctifier. But what is the end of the Father’s thus seeking us? To make us true worshippers of him, that we may worship in spirit and truth. The nature of which we come,

Secondly, to consider. Outward, formal, carnal worship, natural men can join in, be contented with, satisfy conscience by, entertain a good opinion of themselves for, and think God is well pleased with, and will reward them on account of. These are the highest ideas they entertain of divine worship. And thus they worship, they know not what, an unknown God. But they who worship the Father, must worship him in spirit and in truth. That is in the spirit of our minds, agreeably to the spirit of the Gospel, and in the faith of Jesus, who styles himself emphatically, **THE TRUTH**. John xiv. 6. For we can no where see the character of the true God, but in him. He reveals the Father to us, without which no man can know him.

Matt. xi. 27. "He is in the Father, and the Father is in him."
 John x. 38. "No man cometh to the Father, but by him."
 xiv. 6. "He and the Father are one." x. 30. "The Father is reconciled to, and at peace with sinners in him." 2. Cor. v. 18.

Now this is the spirit and truth of the Gospel. This must enter into the spirit of our minds, that we may worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Thus the Father seeks us by his son, sends the spirit of his Son into our hearts, who glorifies the Son in our souls, and we come as lost and hopeless, miserable and wretched, to the Son, and by him to the Father, crying, Abba, Father, look upon us, lost wretches, in thy Son, and let all that rich grace and abundant mercy, which flows from thee to hopeless sinners, through the Son of thy love, be freely bestowed upon us. O, how sweet is this! How infinitely transcendent to all the little, low, mean, legal, and mercenary ways, in which men pretend to worship God! For, here is an object, most delightfully engaging, and most powerfully attracting to our souls. **THE FATHER**; O who can tell the innumerable charms in that joyful name, to the heart of poor sinners! **THE FATHER**, to seek us by his Son, to view, and love, and bless us in his Son, to accept our persons, receive our worship, and be well pleased with us in him, just as though we had never sinned, and were perfectly righteous in his sight. O the joy of this **GRACE AND TRUTH**! O the delight of this faith and this worship! This consists,

(1st.) In Adoration of the **FATHER**. Our souls inwardly adore, and outwardly worship him, for the revelation he has given in his Word, and the manifestation of himself to our souls by his Spirit, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him, the God of all mercies, graces, and blessings, the Father of our spirits, and hope of our souls. Hence "we bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Eph. iii. 14. Having the hearts of children, we unite in judgment with the Father. He declares himself delighted with, and well pleased in his Son. And he also is to us precious—the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Hence, under the influence of this fatherly love, we love to adore, delight to worship, and rejoice to glorify him, in our bodies and spirits, which are his.

(2dly.) In humbling ourselves before him, by confessing what vile creatures, what miserable sinners, we are, and that we live upon his sovereign grace, are supported by his sovereign mercy, and are kept by his sovereign power, from falling into hell. That there is nothing in us to invite his love, and engage his affection; but every thing to excite his anger, and procure his wrath; and that nothing interposes between us sinners and deserved destruction, save his beloved Son, our advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ, **THE RIGHTEOUS.**" 1 John ii. 1. So that it is the constant language of our poor hearts, "**FATHER**, we have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and are no more worthy to be called thy children." There is not a sinner out of hell deserves it less. Yet Father, we had rather be hired servants to thee, than left to our natural pride, and free will to glorify ourselves and depart from thee. For,

(3dly.) We have affiance in the **FATHER**. Not for any thing we are in ourselves, done by us, or found in us; but for what the **FATHER** appears to us, and has done for us, in seeking us, and bringing us to know the riches of his grace, and everlasting love, unsought and unmerited by us; yet so freely bestowed, and so fully abounding to us, in his beloved Son. Though cursed sin, though abounding ingratitude, though prevailing unbelief beset us, yet we cannot, we dare not, we will not (glory to grace)-give up our trust, give over our confidence, let go our hope, and cease from worshipping the **FATHER**. No, under a sight and sense of all our ruin and wretchedness, we will cry, **FATHER**,

Take our whole hearts, and let them be,
For ever sealed to all but thee.

For, (4th.) We delight to rejoice in the **FATHER**. This is very different from rejoicing in ourselves, in any thing done by ourselves, or what we see, find, and feel about ourselves. When our Lord's disciples began to see the evil spirits made subject to them, their spirits were elated, and their joy abounded. But, says our Lord, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Luke x. 20. Thus he directs them to the highest source of heavenly joy, the covenant grace, and everlasting, unchanging love of the **FATHER**, and of their names being recorded in the book of life. Has the Father sought us by his Son? Hath he made our spirits subject to him? Are we become spiritual worshippers of the Father in the Son? This is matter of joy, yea of great joy. But this blessed stream should lead us to the fountain head, even the loving heart, and blessed book of God. For, because our persons had a place in his heart, and our names were wrote in his book, therefore he sought us, caused us to know him, and made us spiritual worshippers of him. O what heights of joy doth the contemplation of this raise in us! Therefore,

(5thly.) In giving glory to our heavenly Father. How dead, dry, and formal is all worship, unless we have God as our Father before us, his love to inspire us, and his glory as our aim! 'Tis this which animates every service, and enlivens

every duty. Yea, it turns services and duties into the most exalted privileges. For the Lord declares of all his spiritual worshippers, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise." Isai. xliii. 21. They are framed by God's grace, and formed for his glory. Therefore, they will shew forth his praise in their life and walk, in public and private, in their families and closets. And they will make it a fixed point with them, to keep holy the Lord's Sabbaths, and shew forth his praises in the great congregation. This brings honour to his name, glory to his grace, and praise to his power, in raising up such dead sinners, as we all naturally are, to seek his face, hear his word, worship him in spirit and truth, feed upon his blessed body, and precious blood, and testify of him, "Lo, this is our GOD; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the LORD; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation." Isai. xxv. 9. Thus blessed are they who dwell in the Lord's house. They will be praising him. Blessed is the man whose strength is in the LORD. They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth in Zion before GOD. For the LORD GOD is a sun and a shield: the LORD will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly. "O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in thee." Psalm lxxxiv.

Lastly, by thus worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth, on earth, our souls are disposed and made meet for the joyful work, and heavenly employ in glory. There our souls shall incessantly, humbly adore, and most delightfully worship, and eternally praise, the Father who loved us in his Son, the Son who redeemed us to the Father by his blood, made us righteous in his righteousness, and presented us before the throne, without spot of sin unto salvation; and the Spirit, who applied the Father's love and the Son's salvation to our souls; and brought us into holy fellowship with the Father and the Son. O, let us think of that joyful, blessed, and glorious day. Let us anticipate its comforts. Let us think of it in every act of worship. Let us realize it to our view, whenever we bow down before the Lord. For then, there will be no obstruction, no weariness, no intermission, no corrupt body to press us down, no worldly thoughts to distract us, no temptations to distress us, no enemy to harass us; but we shall be, what in every act of worship we wish to be, perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. And as sure as we are sought by the Father, and made spiritual worshippers of him on earth, we shall be eternal worshippers of him in heaven. For in the confidence of faith, the joy of hope, and in the comfort of love, we may say to our Father,

That love divine, which made us thine,
 Shall keep us thine for ever.

O, let this add the strongest joy, in the most comfortable assurance, under the sense of all our weakness, frailties, and infirmities, which attend us in all our acts of worship here below. For our dear Lord has taught, "After ye have done all, say we are unprofitable servants." Luke xvii. 10. And yet he assures us, unprofitable as we are, "The Father loveth us, even with the same everlasting, unchanging love, where-with he loved him. John xvii. 23.

A COLLECT.

O LORD our heavenly Father, we should never have sought thee, if thou hadst not first sought us. Glory be to thee for seeking us by thy beloved Son, and making known thyself and thy love to us, in him, by thy gracious Spirit. O, may we ever delight to worship thee in spirit and in truth; and find nearness to thee, communion with thee, with every grace, blessing, and comfort from thee on earth, till we shall see and enjoy thee in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Fifty-first Lord's Day.

ON BEING MADE MEET FOR GLORY.

Giving thanks unto the Father, who HATH made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light. Col. i. 12.

THE comfort and blessedness of many a precious text, are often lost, through our overlooking or mistaking some word in it, on which much depends and great stress is to be laid. That this may not be the case here, I have put the sign of the tense HATH in capitals, in the text. For great glory from GOD shines in it. Great comfort flows to us from it. And, if we rightly understand it, if we are subjects of what is here said GOD HATH done, we also shall be giving thanks unto him. On the other hand, by mistaking a word in a text, or not attending to its import and context, many sad distresses have been, and now are, brought upon the hearts of the righteous, whom the Lord would not have to be sad. For instance, "Luther, in his first awakenings, lay three days and three nights successively upon his bed, without meat, drink, or sleep, labouring in soul, from reading Rom. iii. 26, *ad ostendam Justitiam*, to shew forth God's justice; concluding that Christ was sent for no other end, but to show forth God's justice, as an executor of the law upon sinners. Till at length, being brought to a right understanding of the words, that the justice of God was to be executed upon his Son, "that God might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;" he immediately started up from his bed, his conscience was so relieved, his heart was so confirmed in faith, and his soul so comforted by the truth, as that nothing afterward could discourage him." Glory to GOD, his Gospel is the glad tidings of salvation. It speaks nothing but comfort to sinners, in their salvation by Christ: their title in him to the kingdom of heaven; and through the faith of him, they are made fit and meet for the enjoyment of it. This is our subject. And a most important one it is, to every awakened sinner. For seeing we are every moment liable to the stroke of death, how can we be happy in our hearts, joy in God, and rejoice in hope, unless like these Christians at Colosse, our souls are really made meet for heaven and glory? Nay, and if we do not see and know that they are, we shall not, as they did, give thanks to God for this. Let us therefore consider,

(1st.) The author of this meetness.

(2d.) The nature of it, and wherein it consists.

(3d.) That every believer in Christ is made meet for glory, and is bound to give thanks to the Father for it.

May the Lord grant, that in his light we may see light, so as to know ourselves; understand our state, see our privileges, rejoice in God, and give glory to his blessed name. O, may we know the blessedness and feel the comfort contained in,

First. The Author of this meetness. This is, The FATHER. How ought our hearts to rejoice, when we meet with this precious word FATHER, in the Scriptures! For it should instantly remind us of Jesus, the Son of God, and of our being "the children of God, by faith in him." Gal. iii. 26. Hence the Apostle doth not say, God, or the Lord, but the FATHER, HATH made you meet, &c. because he would remind us of the near and dear relation, which God stands in to us, and that as our heavenly Father in Christ, he loved, chose, adopted and regenerated us to himself, as his own dear children, for whom he has peculiar regard, and in whom he takes special delight. Hence our dear Lord teaches us, whenever we pray to God, to call him, OUR FATHER, to beget in us holy boldness before him, strong confidence in him, great love to him, and peculiar delight in the worship of him. "For the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father." John xiv. 11. He who acknowledges the Son, as the only Saviour, hath the Father also, 1 John ii. 23. He hath all the blessings and comforts of the love of the Father, and shall enjoy a place in his heavenly kingdom. For when our Lord, who hung on the cross as a malefactor, shall appear in his glory, as King and Judge, he will then say to them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of MY FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." Matt. xxv. 34. They were loved, chosen, and blessed by the Father in Christ, before the foundation of the world." Eph. i. 4. Their places were prepared for them by the Father, from the foundation of the world. They were made meet for the heavenly inheritance by the Father, in the fulness of time. Thus the Father gives grace, and secures glory, to all his children in Christ. How joyful then ought we ever to be in our heavenly Father! What love, what praise, what obedience do we owe him! Therefore let us consider,

Secondly. The nature of this meetness for glory, and wherein it consists. Paul, in the context, tells us, (1st.) "The Father HATH delivered us from the power of darkness." This respects the natural blindness of our understanding, the total ignorance of our minds, the prevailing unbelief of our hearts, and the proud, self-righteousness of our spirits. Consider the image of darkness in nature. You cannot discern objects. You cannot see your way. You are in danger every step you take. But it is never totally dark in nature, because the sun is never wholly withdrawn from us. But our souls are naturally under

the power of darkness, as to spiritual objects. We can neither see, know, nor have the least discernment of them : therefore " we account them foolishness." 1 Cor. ii. 14. We see not the evil of sin, the spirituality of God's law, the glory of his Gospel, the worth of our souls, the preciousness of Christ, nor of his being the way to the kingdom of heaven. Sin blinds our eyes. Satan deceives our souls : and hence a self-righteous hope deludes us. For the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Cor. iv. 4. Now while we are in this state, under the power of this darkness, we are no more fit nor meet for the kingdom of God, than the devil himself. For, as we see not the light of the glorious Gospel, we cannot delight in Christ, who is the image of God, therefore we can have no fellowship with God the Father, in the spirit of our minds : for what fellowship hath light with darkness? This power of darkness, is diametrically opposite to the light of the heavenly inheritance. Were it possible to admit a person in this state, to the mansions of light and glory, he could not have the least relish for, or delight in, the joys and employs of the heavenly world. They would be irksome and tiresome to his soul. But the Father loves and pities souls in this state, therefore he delivers them from it, and makes all the sons of glory meet for it. How? " God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the knowledge of the glory of God, in the person of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. When this is the happy case with any sinner, he is delivered from the power of darkness; he sees by the light of the Gospel, where the glory of God shines, and flees too, and takes refuge in the person of Jesus Christ. He no longer desires to live by any righteous, and good character of his own : he sees that he is a vile sinner before God; but he delights to live upon the righteousness, and be found in the Son of God. Thus God and he are at peace. He is reconciled to God, and is brought into fellowship with God, through the Son of his love; therefore his soul is made meet for the enjoyment of God in glory. All such can say, " The darkness is past, and the true light shineth." 1 John ii. 8. They are the children of the light, and of the day. They have the light of truth and love, and rejoice to walk in it; and the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth them from all sin. O, what a deliverance of the Father is this! How comforting! How joyful! But

(2d.) The FATHER HATH not only delivered us from the power of darkness, but HATH also translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Hence, not only are our understandings

enlightened to know Jesus; but our wills are subdued, by the Father's love, to choose him, and our affections attracted to him. In the grace and power of his kingdom, we find ourselves new creatures in Christ, and feel our souls in a new state. The law of this kingdom, even "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, **HATH** made us free from the law of sin and death." Rom. viii. 2. Hence we, who in the self-righteous pride, and free-will folly of our own hearts, once said, "We **WILL** not have this **MAN**, Christ Jesus, to reign over us," now esteem it our highest honour, and greatest glory, to live under his spiritual reign; to be constrained by his love, influenced by his fear, animated by his grace, subjected to his will, conformed to his image, and to follow him in the regeneration.

Thus the Father, by his Spirit, glorifies his Son in our hearts, persuades us to believe in him, bows our wills to him, causes us to set our affections upon him, our hearts to rejoice in him, our minds to be delighted with him, and it is the one desire of our souls to be found in him, as the image of God; in whom the **FATHER** is well pleased, and with whom his soul is delighted. Thus it is evident that the Father **HATH** translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. No power short of the Lord God Almighty, could effect this upon our souls, which are dead in sin, captivated by Satan, under the power of darkness, and the dominion of unbelief. But this the **FATHER**, by his Spirit, **HATH** effected, through the light of his Gospel, upon the souls of all who believe in his Son. This he **HATH** done, by his sovereignty as God, and with the love of a Father. And being thus translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, we claim and come to Jesus as our **PROPHET**, to teach our souls the love and will of our heavenly Father, and to instruct us in the laws of his heavenly kingdom, the mysteries of his precious Person, the riches of his astonishing grace, and the glories of his finished salvation. For, we no longer desire to know, understand, and judge of things after the wisdom of the flesh, but by the teaching of the Spirit. We glory in Jesus as our **PRIEST**, who was sent by the Father, "to bless us, in turning us away from our iniquities." Acts iii. 26. Who hath made an atonement for all our sins. "In whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins." 1 Col. i 14. He is exalted as a Saviour, and hath given repentance unto us." Acts v. 31. And he ever lives "to make intercession for us." Heb. vii. 25. Thus as our **PRIEST**, we want him daily, look to, and live upon him continually. And we delight in him, as our **KING**, who has conquered all our enemies for us, subdued sin, unbelief, and self-righteous pride in us; has given spiritual, holy, heavenly precepts to us, under the influence of which he

sweetly governs our lives, and graciously comforts our hearts, till he eternally glorifies our souls.

Thus we are now framed by the Father's love, formed by the Son's grace, filled by the Spirit's power, to worship and glorify God on earth, and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. But, notwithstanding all this, we never lose sight of our character as sinners, nor are we delivered from our sinful nature. For sin dwelleth in us. We groan under a body of sin and death. We sigh as burdened sinners; O wretched that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death! But we joyfully add, "Thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vii. Now all these irksome feelings, and distressing groanings, prove nothing against our being made meet for glory; yea, rather, they are corroborating evidences, that our souls are alive to God, our feelings and affections spiritual, and that our minds aspire after holiness. For they cause us to go more and more out of nature and self, to look to and live upon precious Christ, our only atonement, righteousness, and strength. Hence, though we are made meet for glory, joy in God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus; yet we are exercised with a self-diffident fear of ourselves, lest by any means, through the lustings of the flesh, and the pride of self-righteousness, Satan should get an advantage of us, so as to cause us to fall away from the knowledge of the truth, the comfort of love, and the joy of salvation. "For God the Father, who hath wrought us for this self-same thing, (meetness for glory) hath also given unto us the earnest of his Spirit. Therefore we are always confident" (in Christ,) 2 Cor. v. 5, 6. Yet he so convinces us of sin, that we are always diffident in ourselves. This is the spirit and temper of all the FATHER'S children, of all the subjects of the SAVIOUR'S kingdom, through the power and influence of the Spirit, the SANCTIFIER: and thus we are made meet now, for our Father's heavenly kingdom in glory. Such is the marvellous love and grace of the holy, blessed, and glorious TRINITY, to sinners of mankind. Inexpressibly blessed are all the subjects of it! Who are they? This is our

Third point to consider. That all believers in Christ are thus made meet, and are bound ever to be giving thanks for it. Believers in Christ! Is not every Christian a believer in Christ? Doubtless. But all who profess themselves, and are called by others, Christians, are not believers in Christ. For every Christian is anointed with the Spirit of Christ. "He has an unction from the Holy One, which teacheth him all things," (needful unto salvation) 1 John ii. 20. Therefore seeing all salvation in Christ, and nothing but destruction in himself; he receives Christ, or believes in him, as held forth in the

Gospel, as the only Saviour, and the only hope for the lost and guilty. Christ is precious to that poor sinner. He is "passed from death unto life. John v. 24. He is "born of God." 1 John v. 1. He is justified, righteous, sanctified, and saved, in the Lord Jesus, with an everlasting salvation. He is made meet for glory. For in one word, He hates sin, and loves holiness. He is averse to what he once loved. He affects those things which he once hated. Were he to die this moment, God would receive him into his kingdom. If he is continued in life, he will live a life of thanksgiving to the FATHER, who HATH thus made him meet. For Christ is his title to glory. And being united to Christ, one with him, a member of him, he has in himself a meetness for glory. For the Spirit of the Father and the Son is in him, whereby he knows the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son; and can join with all saints in that precious declaration, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love God, because he first loved us." 1 John iv. 10, 19.

As the great and perfect love of God is the origin and cause of all our hope, comfort, and blessedness, such will ever eye this, exalt this, glory in this, and be giving praise to the Father for this; and not be exalting themselves, for their great and perfect love to God. No, they will blush and be ashamed, for their little love to the Father, considering his great love to them. Praise is the work of humble souls. The more humility, the more thanksgiving. This is a debt we shall ever be paying, yet ever be owing, and never be out of debt, no not to the countless ages of eternity. Give thanks to the Father is the work and glory of heaven. There the glorified throng are incessantly engaged in it. In this work on earth we imitate saints in glory. We never get so near heaven, nor have so much of heaven in our souls, as when our souls are engaged in this heavenly work of giving praise to the Father. This is the work, not of the lip, but of the heart, and life also. For our meetness for glory consists in our souls being quickened, and made alive to God, in being renewed in the spirit of our minds, in having our hearts purified by faith, in our affections being heavenly and set on things above; therefore the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, will be engaged in this work of giving thanks to the Father, by, and for Jesus Christ, through the gracious influence of the Spirit. O believer! Consider what great things the FATHER HATH done for, and in you, and be humble before him, and thankful to him. For he gave his Son for you, to be your Saviour. He gave his Spirit to you, to unite you to Christ, make you one with Christ, and HATH sanctified you in him, and made you meet to be a partaker of glory with him.

See your exalted mercy. Know your inestimable blessing. Glory in God. Walk in self-abased humility, and in the comfort of his love. Be ever giving thanks to the Father, till he takes you to the heavenly inheritance, for which he hath made you meet. A word or two of

CAUTION.

(1st.) Beware of those who make Christianity consist in nothing more than a set of notions in the head, and deny the blessings and comforts of the Gospel, upon the heart and affections. Whereas it is the grace and glory of the Gospel, that its comforts and privileges are held forth to us, and are by faith enjoyed in us now, in this present time. The Scriptures do not testify, that our loving FATHER, our gracious SAVIOUR, our affectionate SANCTIFIER, will justify, sanctify, save, and make us meet for glory; "but ye are (NOW) washed, (from all your sins, in the blood of the Lamb) but ye are (NOW) sanctified, (in your hearts and affections) but ye are (NOW) justified, (perfectly acquitted, and made perfectly righteous) in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11. The Father HATH thus made us meet for heaven. Our souls are now fitted and prepared for the enjoyment of God, on earth and in glory. Unless this matter be made clear and plain to us, our spirits must be in bondage, we cannot serve God with that cheerfulness, worship him with that delight, nor give him those thanks which are due to him, for these his unspeakable and unmerited favours, bestowed on us.

(2d.) Be not scared by those, who brand the internal qualifications, spiritual affections, holy dispositions, and heavenly desires of the soul, with the name of self-righteousness. Men may chatter and prate as much as they please, about the work of Christ FOR us; but without the Spirit of Christ IN us, we can neither believe on, rejoice in, give glory to, nor follow Christ in the regeneration. Let not such shut your mouths to praise, nor prevent your giving thanks to the Father, for making you to differ from your former selves when in darkness, and from the whole world which lieth in wickedness, by giving you eyes to see, ears to hear, an heart to understand, and affections to be delighted with, the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

(3d.) Ever avoid exalting your own free-will power, your faithfulness to grace, your self-righteous endeavours, your working together with God to sanctify, and make yourself meet for the enjoyment of God, in opposition to the sovereign, everlasting love of the Father, the finished salvation of the Son, and the efficacious power of the Spirit, the Sanctifier. For these counteract humble praising. Therefore humble yourself

continually under your Father's mighty and gracious hand. Walk humbly with him. Give all diligence to be found in peace of him. Great, unspeakably great as the mercy is, for the soul to be made meet for the enjoyment of God, yet press on, there are still infinitely more blessings and comforts before you, to be enjoyed by you. Remember your Lord's words, "That which ye have already hold fast till I come." Rev. ii. 25.

A COLLECT.

GLORY and praise be to God in the highest, that I am a sinner saved from sin and hell, and sanctified and made meet for heaven and glory. This work is thine, O my Father, Saviour, Sanctifier. Take all the glory. Help me to give it thee daily, from the love of my heart, with joyful lips, and by an obedient life, through the abounding grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Last Lord's Day in the Year.

ON THE PORTION OF SAINTS.

The Grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all. Amen. 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

THIS is a jovial season with the men of the world. Here is the birth of Christ, the burial of the old year, and the commencement of the new. How do they celebrate these great events? Just as though the devil was in them; as if they are celebrating his birth, and rejoicing that he was born into the world to destroy their souls, instead of the Son of God to save sinners. For, what provision is now made for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, in rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and contention; yea, in every excess of wickedness which a devil can inspire, and fallen sinners commit! Thus awfully do immortal creatures kill their time, murder their bodies, and destroy their souls. And all this, because they know nothing of the grace, love, and favour of the ever-glorious TRINITY. Such a dying sinner I once visited. He boldly spoke out the language of the hearts of all such. When I mentioned the LORD to him, with an air of the utmost contempt, he said, "I want to have nothing to do with the Lord, nor any of his servants." Lord, what is man if left of thee!

But can we look down with a haughty air of supercilious contempt upon such? The subjects of our pity indeed they are, but not the objects of our scorn. We also are their fellow sinners. Is our nature one whit better than theirs? By no means. Does our conduct differ from theirs? Who made us to differ? To excite humility, sink to shame, stir up gratitude, and keep down self-righteous pride, remember "among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But—O blessed but!—But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (mind what follows) *even when we were dead in sins*, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved. Eph. ii. 3, &c. Those who understand the meaning, and feel the force of these words, would just as soon ascribe any part of their salvation to Satan, as to their own good desires, pious resolutions, sincere endeavours, godly motions

and actings of their own free-will, when they were dead in sins. No. They will be constrained cheerfully, and unreservedly, to resolve it all into the RICH MERCY, GREAT LOVE, and SOVEREIGN GRACE of the whole God-head, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that this rich mercy, great love, and sovereign grace, was fixed upon them, abounded to them, and was manifested in them, prior to any desire, motion, or disposition of theirs, even when they were dead in sins. And hence, each and every such sinner, in spite of Satan's envy, in opposition to the pride of Pharisees, and to the glory of a gracious God, will cry, Why me, Lord! Why me! O to grace, rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing grace, what a mighty debtor am I! Rich mercy, great love, sovereign grace, (O, I can never repeat too oft, never dwell on too long!) These have done all for, and all in me, therefore shall have all the honour, all the praise, and all the glory from me.

Now to such persons the Apostle wishes and prays, that the sweet benedictions and precious blessings contained in the text, may be with them. The blessed sense, and happy enjoyment of which, is most earnestly to be coveted, and most ardently to be prayed for continually. For, enjoying these, we shall be happy, whatever be our lot, station, or circumstance in life. Without these, no gracious soul can be happy, nor will he rest satisfied. Let us therefore meditate on each of these blessings, and on the comfort of having them *with us*. O, may our souls be swallowed up in meditation, on the boundless ocean of the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's favour, to such vile, miserable, wretched sinners as we all are!

First. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." But why put this first, before the love of the Father? Is not his love the ground, or first cause of the grace or favour of the Son? Did he not "so love the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" most true. But, here is a precious reason for this, which always holds true in experience. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, not the love of the Father, is the first object that is presented to our minds as poor sinners, to bring relief to our guilty consciences, and hope to our hopeless souls. And it is through the belief of the grace of the Son, that we attain to the comforting knowledge of the love of the Father. Perhaps this might be the reason, why the Apostle begins with wishing these saints, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. For else, "In this Trinity, none is afore or after other; none is greater or less than another." Neither are their love, grace, and favour, one before another, or one after another; but the grace of the Son is as early as the love of the Father; and the favour of the Holy Ghost is commensurate with both;

though their love, grace, and communion are spoken of distinctly, according to their office characters in the everlasting covenant, and as their blessings and comforts are distinctly experienced in our souls. And indeed, till we really do experience the love, grace, and communion of the holy Trinity in our hearts, the doctrine of it is but speculation in the head; which some natural men may talk of, write about, and contend for; and other natural men will as absolutely deny; and both may live and die unconvinced, unconverted sinners; strangers to the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. For "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Rom. x. 10. And the hearts of such believers only, are a habitation for the Trinity. Here we rest this point. We fully know its truth by the Scriptures. We have felt its power in the experience of our hearts. We are at full certainty of it. We have done with vain janglings about it, "with men of corrupt minds, who resist the truth, and are reprobate (or have no judgment) concerning the faith." 2 Tim. iii. 8. Feeding upon the truth in our hearts, is infinitely preferable to perverse disputings about it. Simple faith will promote the former, and put an end to the latter. Therefore,

The Apostle wishes, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. "For, says he, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. By this we understand what is meant by the grace of Christ. This includes the whole of his grace, or favour, manifested to us sinners, from his birth at Bethlehem, to his death on the cross without the gates of Jerusalem. (1st.) His grace of being incarnate, taking our nature upon him, and becoming Immanuel, God with us, God to us, God for us, against all our enemies. O, what condescending grace! What humbling favour is this, that the Son of the most high God, should become the son of a most mean man, to be united to us, and one with us, that we sinners might be united to and be one with him! This is most astonishing grace!

(2d.) The grace of his holy, obedient life to the law of God, whereby he hath perfectly wrought out, and brought into the court of heaven, and presented to his just and righteous Father, an everlasting righteousness, to be imputed to and put upon us sinners, in which we are made completely righteous before God, and have a clear right and just title to his kingdom. Most amazing grace of Christ!

(3d.) The grace of his suffering all the curses and penalties of law and justice, in our place and stead, and which were due to our sins. For all our iniquities were laid upon him. He bore all our sins in his own body. So that by imputation,

Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived. The heaviest load of sin, the most accumulated guilt of a world of sinners, a number which no man can number, he bore in his holy body, he suffered all the wrath and vengeance due unto them, in our nature and on our account. So that now there is no condemnation to us, who are in him. O, what matchless grace is this! But he not only suffered, but also

(4th.) Manifested his grace to us, by dying to make a full, perfect oblation, sacrifice, and satisfaction for our sins, whereby we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. O, what grace and glory appear in the one atonement of Jesus, the Son of God! The cross proclaims both. At the foot of the accursed tree, view the favour which Christ bears to cursed sinners. He was made—What? Sin for us. Astonishing! But more. He was made a curse for us. He went through an ocean of sorrows. He suffered a hell of agonies. He died as a cursed malefactor, to atone for our sins and redeem our souls. Such is the wonderful grace of Christ. But all this grace manifested in time, proceeded from his love to us, the delight and complacency he had in us. Therefore,

(5th.) He became our surety in eternity. This is the foundation grace of all the rest. Christ engaged, in the everlasting covenant, to do all that for us, which law and justice required of us; to be all that to us, which through the misery and wretchedness of our deplorable state as guilty sinners, we stand in need of. Hence he is “our hope,” 1 Tim. i. 1. “Our peace,” Ephes. ii. 14. “Our rest,” Matth. xi. 28. “Our life,” Col. iii. 4. “Our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” 1 Cor. i. 30. Now all this grace or favour of the LORD, is manifested by, and shines in the MAN Jesus. Hence he says, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. That is, the grace of Jehovah, the anointed MAN, the appointed Saviour be with you.

Let us now see, what is implied by his grace being with us. Blessed be the Lord, it is revealed to us in the Bible. Thus we have the knowledge of it. Praised be the Lord, by believing the Scriptures we experience the comfort, and enjoy the happiness of the grace of Christ in our hearts. So that it is not only grace revealed, but grace known, felt, experienced, and enjoyed in the soul. Yea, believing souls live by, feed upon, and rejoice in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; and can say, “We have tasted the good Word of God.” Heb. vi. 5; and “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” 1 Pet. ii. 3. Thus when the grace of Christ, in his incarnation, his obedient life, to make us righteous, his sufferings and atonement for our sins, his becoming our surety, our hope, peace, rest, life, righteousness, satisfaction and redemption, is received, tasted, relished,

and fed upon in our hearts, as sweet and savoury to our spirits; this is to have the grace of Christ with us, or with our spirits. O, this sweet sense and precious experience of his grace ought ever to be most earnestly coveted by us. What are the

EFFECTS

Of this grace being with us? Numerous, powerful, incomparable, heavenly, and joyful. For, in one word, we have internal, spiritual joy, holy love, heavenly desires, pleasing hopes and aspiring longings. Our hearts are seasoned with, and moulded and conformed into the image of the grace of Christ, and our lives and tempers will be regulated by its powerful influence. Well, therefore, might Paul wish this grace to the Christians at Corinth. Or as to the Galatians, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." If we really are what we profess, brethren of Christ, we shall so prize this precious grace of our dear elder brother, that we shall diligently use all means, praying with all prayer, that it may be ever with us, with our spirits, in its sense, comfort, and experience; and cautiously avoid all those things, which in their own nature, tend to deprive us of its blessed enjoyment. But,

Secondly. Here is another precious blessing to be considered and enjoyed, "The love of God." Is this distinct from the grace of Christ? Not in experience. For where the grace of Christ is, there is the love of God also. But in respect to person and office it is distinct. Hence the learned and judicious Dr. Gill observes, "The Arabic version adds, very justly, as to the sense, though it is not in the text, FATHER: meaning the love of God to his people, which is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, free and undeserved, special and peculiar, is dispensed in a sovereign way, is unchangeable, abides for ever, and is the source and spring of all the blessings, both of grace and glory." This love of God the Father implies, (1st.) His electing love, whereby "he chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world." Ephes. i. 4.

(2d.) His predestinating love, whereby he predestinated us, to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ver. 5.

(3.) His blessing love, in blessing us with all spiritual blessing in Christ, and making us accepted in his beloved Son, ver. 6.

(4th.) His bestowing love in time, when he so loved us, as to give his only begotten Son to us; that we might believe on him, and so not perish, but have everlasting life. John iii. 16.

(5th.) His adopting love, in taking us as his own children, and becoming a Father to us.

(6th.) His unchanging love, having loved us with an everlasting love, in never turning away from us to do us good.

What is implied in this love being with us? The very same as was said of the grace of Christ. To believe it, as it is revealed in the Word, and to enjoy the sense and comfort of it in our hearts. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 8. We enjoy just as much of the love of God as we believe of it, and no more. Jesus said to the Jews, "I know that ye have not the love of God in you." How did this appear? Because they would not receive and believe in him, though he came in his Father's name. John v. 42, 43. I had almost said, faith in Christ creates the sense of the love of God in the heart. This I am confident of, unbelief prevents its entrance there. Christ says, "According to your faith be it unto you." Matth. ix. 28. So much faith, so much love of God. Thus the sense of the love of God is with us, dwelleth in us, our hearts are directed into it, and it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given us through believing. Mistake not here. It is not meant of our love to God, but God's love to us. Many err here. When the love of God is spoken of in Scripture, many apply it to our love of God. This occasions distress of soul, instead of promoting joy in God, and love to God. It is a sight and sense of the love of God to us, that causes our love to God. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." 1 John iii. 16. Thus the love of God is only manifested, known, perceived, enjoyed, and felt in the faith of Jesus. Thus it is with us. O how blessed and happy to have it thus! How ought we to wrestle, strive, and pray, and in the use of every means, seek to be thus blessed and happy, and, as exhorted, "to keep ourselves in (the sense and enjoyment of) the love of God?" Jude 21. "For he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." 1 John iv. 6. This is our heaven of heavens upon earth. Let us now see what are the

EFFECTS

Of this love of God being thus with us. Inward peace, comfort, and joy, and outward obedience and conformity to the will of God, in love to God. "For we love him, because he first loved us." 1 John iv. 19. And, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." v. 3. And, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love (even the sense of the perfect love

of God to us) casteth out all fear, that hath torment." iv. 18. All fear of being hated, condemned, rejected, and separated from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. But the love of God with us ever excites a holy, filial, loving fear of God in us, and a godly jealousy over ourselves. So also it causes us to love our fellow saints and fellow sinners. Thus we have full evidence, that we are born of God, are children of God, are heirs of heaven, and are in the way to glory; that it is secured to us by the love of God in Christ, and we shall certainly possess it. O most blessed, heavenly, joyful effects of the love of God being with us! O, for more and more of its enjoyment!

Thirdly. Let us consider the next apostolic benediction, "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you." This communion means, fellowship, concord, or agreement. This implies and includes what the LORD the Spirit and our spirits have fellowship or agreement in: this is THE TRUTH. He is the Spirit of Truth. He first reconciles us, as enemies, to the truth; and then comforts us as friends, by the truth, and in believing the truth. By the Truth, we understand the whole of the revelation of GOD the Father's love, and GOD the Son's grace to sinners, in their free pardon, full justification, and final salvation. This the Spirit hath revealed in the World. This he testifies of, and bears witness to in our hearts. Thus we have fellowship or agreement, in our spirits, with the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the love of the truth, through the power and influence of the Spirit. As the Holy Ghost proceeds from the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son, so he communicates to us the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son; for he sheds abroad the Father's love in our hearts. Takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto us. He directs our hearts into the love of Christ; and bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. Thus he sanctifies our souls, comforts our hearts on earth, and trains us up for the enjoyment of heaven and glory.

Therefore to have the communion of the Holy Ghost with us, is to have his teaching, leading, guiding, sanctifying, comforting witness with our spirits, to the truth which we believe, and that we are interested in the love of GOD the Father, and the salvation of GOD the Son. Let us never attempt to separate the word of truth from the Spirit of truth. For he does nothing in us, but by the word of truth. He speaks not any thing to us, but from that word. And all his operations, comforts, and influences are agreeable to the word. Hence the

EFFECTS

Of the Holy Ghost being with us are, (1st.) That the word of grace and truth, the Gospel of our salvation, is very precious to our souls, and we find great delight in it. For in his light we see light; even the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus. Because we have spiritual light, light and understanding in the word from the Spirit. Therefore,

(2d.) We are delivered from enthusiastic slights, unscriptural fancies, and vain delusions. For as the word is the ground and warrant of our faith, our faith is built upon and supported by the word, and we are able to give a *reason* of the hope that is in us, from the word of God; not from whims, visions, strange fancies, and uncertain feelings of our own. True, we do taste the grace of God, feel the peace and love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; but it is in knowing, understanding, and believing the word of God. Hence,

(3d.) We live in the comfort of the Spirit, and walk in obedience to the Spirit, and do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, in walking in the vanity of our minds, gratifying our proud, natural, self-righteous views and hopes, exalting our own works; but ever confessing ourselves to be, what we really are, poor sinners, who are saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus, stand by the faith of him, and are justified in his all-perfect and ever-glorious righteousness. Nor do we fulfil the lusts of the flesh, in walking after the course of this present evil world, gratifying our sensual inclinations, to the dishonour of our dear God, and the reproach of our holy profession; but we study to abstain from the very appearance of carnal evil, as being contrary to our spiritual good. For

(4th.) We fear to grieve the Holy Ghost, and cause him to withdraw from us. That's a sweet petition, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from us." It implies that his comforts are known, his presence prized, and his absence dreaded. If this is really our happy case, we must, we shall, fear to grieve him, either by indulging our self-righteous pride, gratifying our carnal lusts, neglecting his appointed means of grace, or slighting his gracious aid, divine teaching, heavenly illumination, holy influence, and comforting presence. For what is a Christian without the sense of the presence of the Holy Ghost? Verily a poor, miserable sinner, beset with doubts, bowed down with fears, dejected with distress, because surrounded with darkness. That poor martyr, who was going to the stake to be burned, found it a very hard and trying work, and went on very heavily, because he had not the presence of the Spirit. But just before he arrived at the place of execution, he cried out

in a transport of joy to his fellow-sufferer, "O he is come! he is come!" and he died triumphantly. O my dear fellow redeemed sinners! we can neither live happily, nor die comfortably, without the presence of the Spirit. Let us therefore ever invoke him to be with us, and deprecate his absence from us. Let us conclude with one word of

CONSOLATION.

Is it the common privilege of all believers, to have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, to be with them? Then who so happy, so highly favoured as they? What though they are poor sinners, the subjects of sin, the envy of devils, the scorn of men, and the outcasts of the world; yet the love of God the Father is everlastingly fixed on them, the precious blood of the Son of God was shed for them, his ever-glorious righteousness is upon them; and the power of God the Holy Ghost is engaged to sanctify, comfort, and keep them, in all their journey through this wilderness state, and to bring them safely home to their Father, God, and their Saviour, Jesus. O believers! How ought ye to bless yourselves in your covenant LORD, to exult and triumph in the matchless love, sovereign grace, and precious communion of the holy, blessed, and glorious TRINITY! For, how safe are ye? How secure your state? How joyful ought your souls ever to be? Yes, but says a poor, doubting, dejected soul, this is all very true, and very happy for those who experience this; but I go on heavily from day to day, while the enemy oppresseth me, and tauntingly asks, "Where is now thy God? Thou art totally destitute of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Thou art only a hypocrite and a deceiver. Thy soul is unenlightened and dead in sin: hell will be thy portion." Indeed! And is this thy sorrow, fear, and distress? Dost thou cry out under it, and cry to the Lord for mercy, grace, love, and deliverance from it? Verily, thou art the first blind sinner that ever saw the light of truth; the first dead sinner that ever felt the burden of sin, and cried to be delivered from it: the very first graceless sinner that ever prized, sought for, and prayed to have the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost with him. There may be hypocrisy in thee, for who is free from it? But there is not the least sign, that that soul is an hypocrite, who fears, and dreads, and prays against hypocrisy. This, no hypocrite ever did. And as to hell's being thy portion, it verily is the desert both of your soul and mine.

But shall never be the portion of any soul, who believes in, and flies to the grace of the Lord Jesus, and to the love of the Father, and cries, "Lord save, or I perish!" For that soul is born again of the Spirit; the communion of the Holy Ghost is with his spirit; and he has fellowship with the Spirit, in the truth, as it is in Jesus. And, therefore, to suppose that a soul can be loved of God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and born again of God the Holy Ghost, and yet perish in hell at last for his sins, is the most dreadful, blasphemous, diabolical doctrine, that can be advanced. It is contrary to every attribute and perfection of Deity. It on one hand strikes the poor, sensible, penitent sinner, with dread and horror; and on the other, puffs up the bold, presuming, vain-confident, and self-righteous sinner with pride, by causing him to imagine he can do something himself, to render his salvation more sure and effectual than the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the power of the Spirit can effect. Therefore, if any doctrine may be called "the doctrine of devils," it is this. Nor could Satan, with all his infernal rage, and diabolic opposition to THE TRUTH, advance one point of doctrine more dishonourable to the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the power of the Holy Ghost, nor more injurious to the peace, holiness, and happiness of men than this. Away then with all such unscriptural notions, which subvert faith, destroy comfort, and dishonour God, to the bottomless pit, from whence they sprang. And "Let God be true and every man a liar" who opposeth his truth.

A COLLECT.

O HOLY, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. Heavenly Father, comfort us with thy love. Blessed Saviour, refresh us by thy grace. Holy Spirit, sanctify us by thy communion with our spirits. LORD, strengthen our faith in the knowledge of thee: confirm our hope in thee: inflame our love to thee; and influence our hearts to serve and obey thee, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life; that we may eternally enjoy, and everlastingly praise thee in thy endless kingdom of bliss and glory. Hear, answer, and accept us in Jesus Christ; and for the sake of all that he has done and suffered, for the salvation of lost sinners. Amen.

HAVING now, through the grace of God, finished this Work, I commend it to God, and implore his blessing upon it. O, that what is sown in great weakness may be raised in mighty

power. May the Lord in mercy pardon what may have dropped from my pen, which is contrary to his word and will. What is agreeable thereto may he abundantly own, and greatly bless to the heart of every Reader. I heartily wish and pray, "Grace be with ALL (by whatever name known or called) who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," that we may keep an everlasting Sabbath with him. Amen.

FINIS.

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